NATION

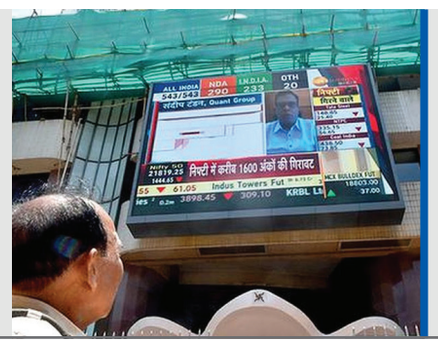
IIT Bombay & Delhi among top 150 varsities in world: QS Ranking

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

Investors richer as markets bounce back

≫ Page: 7 ≪



SPORTS

Alcaraz beats Tsitsipas to set s/f showdown with Sinner

≫ Page: 8 ≪

www.twitter.com/EnglishSalar
www.facebook.com/EnglishSalar
www.instagram.com/dailysalarenglish
youtube.com/@dailysalardigital

SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in www.magzter.com 6 JUNE 2024 | THURSDAY | BENGALURU | 28 DHUL-QIDAH, 1445 AH Vol 4 | Issue No 135 | Pages: 8

NDA elects Modi its leader again

JD(U) and TDP pledge support to BJP

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Preparing to take oath for a third straight term as the head of a coalition government, Prime Minister elect Narendra Modi on Wednesday chaired a meeting of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance's members who unanimously elected him as its leader.

NDA MPs will meet on 7 June to formally elect Modi as their leader and the alliance leaders will then go to the President to submit their letters of support.

The new government may be sworn in on 8 June, sources said, adding that there is a view to wrap up the formalities quickly to not allow any mood of uncertainty to build up, something a buoyant opposition may push.

How soon the BJP and its allies reach an agreement on matters like the share of ministries each party may get and other terms of negotiations could also be a factor in deciding the timing of the swearing-in or they could put off the tricky issues for resolution at a later stage.

TDP leader N Chandrababu Naidu, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, LJP(R) leader Chirag Paswan, JD(S) leader H D Kumarawamy, Jana Sena's Pawan Kalyan, AGP's Atul Bora and NCP's Praful Patel were among the 21 leaders from 16 parties who attended the meeting besides Modi and BJP's Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh and J P Nadda.

PM elect Narendra Modi with TDP Chief N Chandrababu Naidu, JD(U) Chief Nitish Kumar during NDA meet in New Delhi, Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

A resolution passed at the meeting said the NDA government will continue working to lift people's living standards for the country's all-round development while conserving its heritage.

The NDA has won 293 seats in the Lok Sabha election, comfortably above the majority mark of 272 in the 543-member House, paving the way for Modi to take the oath for a third consecutive term, a first for any ruling alliance since 1962.

However, it will be a different act for him this time as the BJP has fallen well short of the majority and depends on allies for the government-formation after enjoying a comfortable majority on its own in the previous two terms of his government.

In terms of their parties' strength, Naidu, Kumar and Shinde are the three biggest NDA constituents in that order after the BJP.

The parties of Naidu and Kumar, who together command the support of 28 MPs, have rubbished speculation on of them joining INDIA bloc. Naidu has reiterated his support to the BJP. Asked by a reporter if he is in the NDA, Naidu shot back,"We contested the elections together. Why do you doubt." —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

SEATS IN LS
543
MAJORITY MARK
272
SEATS WON

NDA: 293

BJP	240
TDP	16
JD(U)	12
Shiv Sena	7
LJPRV	5
JD(S)	2
JNP	2
RLD	2
Others	7

Kingmakers
JD(U) Nitish Kumar
TDP Chandrababu

INDIA: 232

INC	99
SP	37
AITC	29
DMK	22
Sena (UBT)	9
NCP (SP)	8
CPI(M)	4
RJD	4
AAP	3
Others	17

Kharge invites parties to join INDIA

INDIA is not staking claim at govt formation

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

The INDIA bloc would welcome all parties that share a fundamental commitment to the values enshrined in the Preamble of Constitution, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge said on Wednesday. He said this at the first meeting of the Opposition grouping after its impressive gains in Lok Sabha polls.

Kharge added that INDIA bloc partners will take appropriate steps at the appropriate time to realise the people's desire not to be ruled by the BJP government.

Addressing the media after the nearly two-hour meeting which was seen as the alliance keeping its options open and not staking claim at government formation for now, he said the Opposition leaders resolved to continue their fight against the "fascist rule" of BJP led by Narendra Modi even as they thanked the people for their overwhelming support to the INDIA bloc.

He said the decision has been taken by all constituents of the INDIA bloc in one voice.

Congress President had convened the meeting to discuss the political situation and the election results, explore any possibility of government formation and whether to reach out to their old partners Nitish Kumar and Chandrababu Naidu.

TN CM MK Stalin, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and SP Chief Akhilesh Yadav during INDIA meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

> **The constituents of the INDIA bloc thank the people of India for their overwhelming support. The people's mandate has been a befitting reply to the BJP and their politics of hate, corruption and deprivation**
>
> -Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress President

He also said that the Opposition would continue to work together and would definitely stand by the promises made to the people and keep them.

"The constituents of the INDIA bloc thank the people of India for their overwhelming support. The people's mandate has been a befitting reply to the BJP and their politics of hate, corruption and deprivation," Kharge said.

"This is a mandate in defence of the Constitution of India, and against price rise, unemployment and crony capitalism and also to save democracy," Kharge added while announcing the decision of the alliance partners.

"The mandate is decisively against Modi, against him and the substance and style of his politics. It is a huge political loss for him personally apart from being a clear moral defeat as well. However, he is determined to subvert the will of the people," he said.

—*PTI*

WE ARE HIRING

SUB-EDITOR
WEB EDITOR

Journalism degree preferred but not essential

Applicants with maximum 2 years of experience preferred. Freshers are encouraged to apply

SEND YOUR CV TO

asma@salar.news
anushreeirwin@gmail.com

9 trekkers from K'taka die in U'khand

BENGALURU, 5 JUNE

A trekking expedition in Uttarakhand turned deadly on Wednesday after nine members of a 22-member team from Karnataka died due to harsh weather conditions.

The group, organised by Himalayan View Trekking Agency, had started on a 35-kilometer trek in Uttarkashi on 29 May.

Meanwhile, 13 trekkers were rescued.

They started their trek on Tuesday in the high altitude area of Shastratal Mayali in Uttarakhand. After reaching the destination, they tried to return to the camp again. However, the weather turned completely bad at 2 pm due to a blizzard and they were stranded.

The five of the nine deceased are Sindhu Vakekalam 44; Asha Sudhakar 71; Sujatha Mungurwadi 52; Vinayak Mungurwadi 55; Chitra Praneeth 48 and Venkatesh Prasad 53, The rescued are Jayaprakash BS, 61; Bharat Bommanagoudar, 53; Anil Jammatige Arunachala Bhatta 52; Madhu Kiran Reddy 52; Sheena Lakshmi 47; Soumya Kanale 37; Vinayaka MK 47; Sudhakar S, 64; Shiva Jyothi, 45; Vivek Sridhar, 38; Naveen A, 39, and Rittika Gindal, all from Bengaluru North.

Smruti Prakash Dolas, 40, a resident of Pune was also rescued.

Indian Air Force deployed helicopters to assist in the rescue, but operations were halted due to worsening weather conditions and are expected to resume tomorrow morning. Karnataka Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda visited Dehradun to monitor the rescue efforts and met with the eight rescued trekkers. "Efforts are on to trace four more," stated Gowda. "Due to bad weather conditions the operations were stopped and will begin again tomorrow morning." He later met the eight rescued trekkers at the Bijapur Guest House in Dehradun. Chief Minister Siddaramiah also expressed his concern, stating, "Some more trekkers are yet to be rescued. Adverse weather is severely hampering rescue operations and our government is trying its best to bring everyone to safety. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a weather warning for several districts in Uttarakhand, including Haridwar, Udham Singh Nagar, Uttarkashi, Tehri, and Dehradun.

—*Salar News*

Revenue Minister Krishna Byregowda met the eight rescued trekkers at the Bijapur Guest House in Dehradun **PHOTO: SALAR**

Fadnavis says will quit as DyCM after M'rashtra loss

MUMBAI, 5 JUNE

After BJP's Lok Sabha tally came down from 23 to 9 in Maharashtra, Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday offered to quit the post so that he could work "full time" for the party ahead of Assembly elections.

The Assembly elections in the state are scheduled in less than six months from now.

"The entire responsibility for this result is mine. I agree that I was lacking somewhere in all this and am going to make all efforts to overcome this shortcoming," he told a press conference after a review meeting on Lok Sabha results.

The meeting, convened a day after the election results were announced, was attended by top BJP leaders, including state Unit Chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule. The primary agenda was to analyse the party's performance and discuss future strategies.

Devendra Fadnavis **PHOTO: PTI**

"Farmers' issues played a dominant role in some seats. Also, the false propaganda that the Constitution would be altered impacted some voters," Fadnavis said.

He further said that coordination issues exist with Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar of NCP.

When asked to respond later on the remarks by Fadnavis, Shinde said that they had fought elections collectively and the defeat was a collective responsibility.

—*PTI*

Women isolated during menses, K'taka gets notice

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued a notice to the Karnataka over a report alleging banishing of new mothers and menstruating women to distant and isolated huts in Bisadihalli area of Tumakuru district. In a statement issued on Wednesday, NHRC observed that the content of the news report, if true, raise serious issues of violation of the human rights of innocent women and young babies. NHRC has taken suo motu cognisance of a media report that a 19-year-old woman, who underwent a caesarean operation, was banished to a distant and isolated hut, as per the tradition for new mothers and menstruating women in Bisadihalli area of Tumakuru district. The hut did not have a bed or toilet, the statement said. Accordingly, the NHRC has issued a notice to the chief secretary, government of Karnataka, seeking a detailed report within four weeks. —*PTI*

CBSE advises schools to review marks assessment

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has detected significant variation between theory and practical marks in certain subjects among 50 per cent students in over 500 schools. The board has advised them to review their internal assessment procedures, officials said on Wednesday..

The schools have been advised to prioritise fairness and accuracy in assessing practical examinations and ensure the process is realistic and adds substantial value to students' academic journey.

"This variance highlights a need for meticulous assessment during practical examinations in schools. Consequently, the Board has issued an advisory to such schools to review their internal assessment procedures," CBSE secretary Himanshu Gupta said.

The CBSE noted that the aim is to implement a more robust, transparent, and reliable mechanism to ensure that the assessment process is realistic and adds substantial value to the students' academic journey.

PHOTO: PTI

"This advisory serves as a reminder to prioritize fairness and accuracy in assessing practical examinations, thereby enhancing the quality of education imparted in CBSE-affiliated institutions," he said. —*PTI*

AFTER POLL RESULT

Aura of 'invincibility' around Modi 'shattered': World media

WASHINGTON/LONDON, 5 JUNE

The "aura of invincibility" around Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been "shattered" by the voters who gave Opposition a new lease on life, this is how the international media described the outcome of India's general elections.

India's election results appeared as the top news among influential mainstream newspapers in the US. The New York Times (NYT) started its report by noting, "Suddenly, the aura of invincibility around Narendra Modi has been shattered."

Terming the results as "unexpectedly sobering," it noted that they were a "sharp reversal a decade into Modi's transformational tenure."

"Modi's Party Wins, but it's far from a landslide," said the second lead story on the front page of The NYT. "A sobering result for a Prime Minister on the Cusp of a 3rd term," the daily said. "India's voters rebuke Modi," said the lead story of The Washington Post, and added that the election results were a rare setback for Hindu nationalists.

Modi's Party Wins, but It's Far From a Landslide

A Sobering Result for a Prime Minister on the Cusp of a 3rd Term

The NYT said the results were sobering **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

Tuesday's results showed that "India's democracy is not as dead as we thought; that is for sure," Devesh Kapur, a political scientist at the Johns Hopkins University School was quoted as saying by The Post.

The Editorial Board of The Wall Street Journal in its editorial said the election result suggests that Indians have again used the world's largest democracy to warn those leaders to do better. "Modi's victory, even if diluted, is certainly not a good omen for Pakistan. It's not surprising that the Indian Prime Minister had upped the ante against Pakistan on the election trail," the Dawn newspaper from Pakistan wrote.

—*PTI*

RS 130 CRORE COCAINE SEIZED OFF KUTCH COAST

GANDHIDHAM, 5 JUNE

Thirteen unclaimed packets of cocaine, valued at Rs 130 crore in the international market, were recovered from a creek area near Gandhidham town in Gujarat's Kutch district in the early hours of Wednesday, police said. A preliminary probe suggested the smugglers had hidden the contraband at the sea shore to avoid getting caught, Kutch Superintendent of Police Sagar Bagmar said, adding this is the second major drug recovery from the same creek area in eight months. "We have recovered 13 unclaimed packets of cocaine, each weighing, from a creek area near Gandhidham in Kutch. We have registered a case against unidentified persons," Superintendent of Police, ATS, Sunil Joshi said.

—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Mysuru girl comes 2nd in SSLC exams after revaluation

MYSURU, 5 JUNE

MD Sudeksha, a student from Mysuru, emerged as the state's second topper in the SSLC examinations after a revaluation in her Mathematics paper. Sudeksha, who had initially secured an 620 marks out of 625, was confident that she deserved a perfect score in Mathematics as well. Upon receiving only 95 marks in the subject, she opted for a revaluation. The revaluation results, announced on Wednesday, confirmed her expectations. Her marks in Mathematics were revised to 99, bringing her total score to 624. Ankita Basappa, a student from Melligeri Morarji Residential School in Mudhola, Bagalkot, maintained the top position with a 625 score. Sudeksha shares the second-place spot with eight other students who also secured 624 marks after revaluations. *—Salar News*

Rowdy hacked to death in Hassan

HASSAN, 5 JUNE

A notorious rowdy sheeter known as Child Ravi, 45, was brutally murdered with a machete in the early hours in Hemavatinagar, Hassan. While Ravi was riding a two-wheeler to fetch drinking water, miscreants struck him from behind with their vehicle, knocking him down. They then attacked him indiscriminately with machetes, giving him no chance to escape. The brutal killing is believed to be an act of personal revenge. Ravi, also known as Child Ravi had a criminal history, including accusations of rape, murder and robbery. Ravi had been out on bail after serving time in jail. The incident took place near the residence of local MLA Swaroop Prakash. The Pension Mohalla police quickly responded to the scene and conducted an inspection. Hassan SP Mohammad Sujeeta has formed two teams. *—Salar News*

Stones pelted at Chikkaballapur MLA's home office

CHIKKABALLAPUR, 5 JUNE

Unidentified miscreants pelted stones at the home office of Chikkaballapur MLA Pradeep Eshwar at Kandavara here on Tuesday damaging a window. According to police, the incident took place at around 10.30pm. Though the police are verifying the CCTV footage, the faces of the miscreants are not visible as it was dark and the miscreants resorted to this act from a distance, said Shivakumar, Deputy superintendent of police, Chikkaballapur . The incident occurred after BJP's K Sudhakar won the Chikkaballapur Lok Sabha seat on Tuesday. Eshwar had vowed to quit as MLA if Sudhakar won the elections. Meanwhile, a letter claiming to be written by Eshwar, in which it has been stated that he has tendered his resignation letter was doing rounds in social media, but his followers have stated that it was a fake letter. *—Salar News*

Kharge factor swerves Cong to victory in 5 of its 9 seats

Kalyana-Karnataka region saves face for Congress

BENGALURU, 5 JUNE

Five out nine Lok Sabha seats that the ruling Congress won came from the Kalyana-Karnataka region, giving a major boost to AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge, who hails from this part.

The NDA got 19 out of 28 Lok Sabha seats, with BJP winning in 17 and JD(S) in two.

The grand old party had in fact lost all the five seats -- Bidar, Kalaburagi, Raichur, Koppal and Ballari—in this region, in 2019. Kharge himself too had lost from Kalaburagi.

This time in Bidar, Minister Eshwar Khandre's son Sagar Khandre won by a margin of 1,28,875 votes defeating Union Minister Bhagwanth Khuba, while in Kalaburagi Kharge's son-in-law Radhakrishna Doddamani won by a margin of 27,205 votes defeating MP Umesh Jadhav of the BJP.

In Raichur, former IAS officer G Kumar Naik won by defeating Raja Amareshwara Naik of BJP by 79,781 votes, Rajashekar Hitnal won in

Mallikarjun Kharge PHOTO: PTI

- This time in 2024, in what is being seen as a turn around, Congress reigned supreme in the region

Koppal against BJP's Basavaraj K Sharanappa by 46,357 votes, and in Ballari former minister E Tukaram defeated BJP's ST leader and former minister B Sriramulu by 98,992 votes.

A Congress bastion for a long time, the grand old party had started yielding ground in the region—that was earlier called Hyderabad-Karnataka—in 2009, when BJP had won three seats (Raichur, Koppal and Ballari) with the help of Bellary's Reddy brothers. Kharge and N Dharam Singh (former chief miniter) were the two from Congress who had managed to win, from Gulbarga and Bidar respectively.

In 2014 too Congress won two seats — Kalaburagi (Kharge) and Raichur (BV Nayak), leaving the remaining three to BJP. In 2019, BJP swept the region, winning all the five seats.

This time in 2024, in what is being seen as a turn around, Congress reigned supreme in the region.

The 81-year-old Kharge had opted out of the electoral race, citing his age along with the role of managing the party nationally and coordinating with the INDIA bloc. The party had fielded Doddamani, a businessman who also manages educational institutions.

Infighting and dissidence are said to have led to BJP's defeat in Bidar and Koppal. The "Kharge factor" too seems to have worked for the ruling party in the region, where the veteran is its tallest leader, besides the guarantee schemes launched by the Siddaramaiah government.

Kharge had put his might behind the campaign in the region and had extensively travelled in these constituencies, highlighting his contribution in those districts, including the implementing Article 371(J), which grants special status to backward districts of Hyderabad-Karnataka region (renamed as Kalyana Karnataka). *—PTI*

AIMS BIG

HDK eyes Agri portfolio in new NDA government

BENGALURU, 5 JUNE

PHOTO: PTI

JD(S) leader and former chief minister HD Kumaraswamy on Wednesday hinted that his party was interested in the Agriculture portfolio in the new NDA Government.

JD(S), headed by his father and former prime minister HD Deve Gowda, joined the NDA last year.

BJP and JD(S) fought the Lok Sabha elections together, which has a total of 28 seats. BJP won 17 seats and JD(S) two.

Asked about JD(S)' "demands" ahead of government formation, he said: "we don't have any such demand. Our priority is resolution of issues concerning Karnataka that have been there for long from the Centre. About giving representation (Cabinet berth) to Karnataka at the Centre, Narendra Modi will decide."

On his Ministerial aspirations, Kumaraswamy said the NDA leadership will decide. "Let's speak about it when the time comes. Delhi leaders know what is the appropriate decision that needs to be taken for the situation there (in Karnataka). They will decide," he said.

Regarding speculation in some quarters that he will be the Agriculture Minister, with similar desire being expressed by several other JD(S) leaders, he acknowledged that his party's interest is in the Agriculture department, "Let's see what decisions will happen." *—PTI*

CBI takes over illegal money transfer probe

BENGALURU, 5 JUNE

Crime Bureau of Investigation has taken up the probe into the multi-crore illegal money transfer case involving Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation Ltd, Home Minister G Parameshwara said on Wednesday.

The Cabinet will take a call on handing over to the CBI investigation covering the State government departments linked to the case, once it gets a formal request from the central agency, he said here.

Mumbai-headquartered Union Bank of India last week filed a formal complaint with the CBI in embezzlement of public money of the state-run Corporation involving its MG Road branch. It had also suspended three officials.

The Corporation had filed an FIR against top Union Bank of India officials with the police, over embezzlement of Rs 88 crore.

"Bank had written to the CBI, there is a rule in the central government that if there is a case of bank fraud of over Rs 3 crore CBI can suo moto probe it. So on the basis of the bank's letter to CBI, they have taken up the case," Parameshwara told reporters here. The illegal money transfer issue came to light, after accounts superintendent at the Corporation, Chandrashekhar P, died by suicide on 26 May, leaving behind a death note.

The note revealed the unauthorised transfer of Rs 187 crore belonging to the Corporation from its bank account, and from that, Rs 88.62 crore was illegally moved to various accounts allegedly belonging to "well-known" IT companies and a Hyderabad-based cooperative bank. *—PTI*

MILD RELIEF

A pedestrian crosses the road amid rains at Kengeri outer ring road, in Bengaluru on Wednesday PHOTO: SALAR

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Cops, BBMP plant 10,000 trees to celebrate Environment Day

BENGALURU, 5 JUNE

Bangalore City Police Department along with Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) anf Forest Department planted at least 10,000 trees the City on Tuesday to celebrate the World's Envirnoment Day.

This effort contributes to a nationwide campaign aiming to plant a staggering 1 crore trees. The launch event held at DCP CAR South, Parade Ground, Adugodi was attended by B Dayanand, City Police Commissioner, and AN Yellappa Reddy, renowned environmentalist. The Indian Air Force also organised a tree plantation drive at the Equipment Depot at Air Force Station in City. Over 100 saplings were planted within the Depot Campus, Gagan Vihar, by the villagers of Kempapura, which is the village adopted by the Depot. Air Commodore Kumar addressed Depot personnel, highlighting the dangers of declining green cover. He encouraged everyone to plant trees in their gardens. Additionally, an interactive

On the occassion of World Environment Day, City policemen plant saplings near Parade Ground, Adugodi PHOTO: SALAR

session educated people and children about environmental conservation.

Bengaluru Division of South Western Railway took a green initiative by organising programmes such as street play performed by Scouts and Guides volunteers highlighting issues such as plastic pollution and waste management. *—Salar News*

Citizens call to save City's last baobab tree

ZUHA KHAN
BENGALURU, 5 JUNE

On World Environment Day City historians and environmentalists wrote five letters to the High Court to protect the last Baobab tree present on the court's premises.

The founder of the Heritage Beku, a heritage advocacy group, Priya Chetty Rajagopal has written a letter to the High Court, Horticulture Department, Cubbon Park, DCF Forests, and BBMP Commissioner, again to protect the Baobab tree. Speaking to Salar News, Rajagopal said, "The tree surrounding is crowded with asbestos sheets and a stationary shop has come so close to the tree that it might not survive." However, they claimed that they did not receive any response.

The Heritage Beku demands the High Court to immediately remove the barricades, clear up the area and get a specialist from the Horticulture Department to come in and have a look at the tree and take measures on how to protect it.

In 2023 the BBMP introduced concrete grates for trees. A year later, and there is no update from the BBMP regarding this project.

Speaking to Salar News, the members of the Heritage Beku have pointed out that measures like constructing iron grates for trees are an imperative step to safeguard our green friends in the City.

Suresh Jayaram, a well-known artist, curator, historian and member of Heritage Beku told Salar News that he has been reaching out to the court for over 20 days for immediate attention to this matter. Baobab trees have an estimated life span of three thousand years, and only fewer than 250 mature trees remain on Earth today. Mandu in Madhya Pradesh is currently the only place where these trees are found. The last tree in Bengaluru died in Lalbagh due to negligence from the authorities.

When Salar News tried getting in touch with the Horticulture Department, they were informed about its unavailability to comment on this. *—Salar News*

HC stays decision to shortlist NMDC Director candidate

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

High Court has temporarily stopped the Centre's decision to qualify and shortlist Satyender Rai for the position of Director at the National Mineral Development Corporation Limited, along with postponing his interview.

Justice SR Krishna Kumar of the High Court issued this order on 4 June and set the next hearing for 2 July.

The Union of India through the Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB), the Ministry of Steel, and the National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) Ltd have been notified by the court after considering the petitioner's detailed submissions. The petitioner, TK Srinivasan, a shareholder of NMDC, argued that NMDC Ltd, being a government company, appoints its directors under the Companies Act and that the appointment of directors does not fall under the provision of appointing a director by the shareholders in the Annual General Body Meeting or Extra-ordinary General Board meeting. *—ANI*

LAUNCH VEHICLE MARK–3

ISRO Chairman opens HAL unit; rocket manufacturing gets boost

BENGALURU, 5 JUNE

ISRO Chairman S Somanath inaugurated state-of-the-art propellant tank production and computer numerical control (CNC) machining facilities at Hindustan Aeronautics Limited's Aerospace Division here, boosting rocket manufacturing capacity .

HAL said the facilities would provide a major boost to ISRO's ability to meet its growing production needs, particularly for the Launch Vehicle Mark–3, India's heaviest and most powerful rocket.

Currently, the existing capacity allows for only two LVM3 launches per year, whereas ISRO's requirements stand at six launches annually, according to an HAL statement on Wednesday. The facilities will address this gap, enabling HAL to manufacture enough critical components to support the production of six LVM3 rockets per year, it said.

Somanath was quoted as saying in the statement that HAL has enormous capacities and this potential should be explored in the larger interest of both the organisations.

HAL's Chairman and Managing Director (Additional Charge) CB Ananthakrishnan said the ongoing collaboration with ISRO would accelerate human spaceflight missions and development of Next-Generation Launch Vehicles (NGLV). "The day is not far off when Space becomes an important vertical of HAL", he added. *—PTI*

Hassan milk society boycotts farmers 'for voting for Cong'

HASSAN, 5 JUNE

Villagers of Somanahalli, near Hassan protested in front of the Deputy Commissioner office on Wednesday. They alleged that the milk producers' cooperative society in the village refused to take milk from them for allegedly voting for Congress candidate in the Lok Sabha elections, which led to JD(S)' Prajwal Revanna's defeat.

According to villagers, the society was controlled by people associated with the JD(S) .The secretary of the society had allegedly refused to take milk from Congress votes

Milk producers' cooperative societies collect milk from villagers and send the same to Hassan Milk Union. The milk producers get weekly payments from the union. The protesters alleged that Somanahalli Nagaraju, president of Hassan District Cooperative Central Bank, and other leaders of the JD(S) were putting pressure on the local milk producers' society.

According to villagers, the society was controlled by people associated with the JD(S) PHOTO: SALAR

The protesters submitted a memorandum to the DC.

However, Hassan Milk Union Managing Director H Mahesh said that he has no information about the incident. He claim that there are 1,750 plus milk unions in the district and societies have local elected body management that are not influenced by parties. On Tuesday, JD(S) lost its stronghold of Hassan for the first time in 20 years with Prajwal, the sitting MP who is under arrest over cases of sexual assault, losing to Congress candidate Shreyas M Patil by 43,738 votes. He was arrested on 31 May and is in the custody of the Special Investigation Team (SIT) until 6 June. *—PTI*

Naveen Patnaik resigns as Odisha CM after poll defeat

BHUBANESWAR, 5 JUNE

Marking the end of his 24-year-rule in Odisha, BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik on Wednesday resigned from the post of the chief minister after the defeat of his party in the Assembly elections in the state. Patnaik handed over his resignation letter to Governor Raghubar Das at the Raj Bhavan, sources said. Though a number of BJD leaders had gathered at Patnaik's residence, he came alone to the governor's house to tender his resignation. BJD supremo only waved at waiting journalists and left the premises after submitting his resignation letter. BJP stormed to power in Odisha by securing 78 of the 147 assembly seats, while BJD managed to win only 51 seats. Congress bagged 14 constituencies and CPI (M) secured one, while three Independent candidates also emerged victorious. —*PTI*

J'khand's trans candidate gets fewer votes than NOTA

DHANBAD, 5 JUNE

Jharkhand's lone transgender candidate from the Dhanbad Lok Sabha seat got fewer votes than the None of the above (NOTA), according to poll results declared on Tuesday. Sunaina Kinner had filed nomination papers as an Independent contestant from the seat, challenging heavyweight candidates of national as well as regional parties. Kinner received 3,462 votes, while 7,354 electors chose the NOTA option. "I am not bothered about votes I received. I am happy with the way the people accepted me as a candidate from the Dhanbad seat and showered their love and support on me," Sunaina said.—*PTI*

Mehbooba calls for release of Engineer Rashid after win

SRINAGAR, 5 JUNE

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti said Wednesday the Centre should respect the verdict of the people and release jailed politician Sheikh Abdul Rashid, alias Engineer Rashid, following his win in the Lok Sabha election in Jammu and Kashmir. Engineer Rashid, who is in prison in a terror financing case, emerged a giant slayer in Jammu and Kashmir, defeating former J&K chief minister and National Conference vice-president Omar Abdullah in the Baramulla seat by a margin of over two lakh votes. In a post on 'X', Mufti said, "Heartfelt congratulations to Mian Altaf, Aga Ruhullah, Engineer Rashid & Haneefa Jan for winning the parliament elections. Government of India must respect verdict of the people & release Engineer Rashid."—*PTI*

'Steps being taken to ensure Amritpal Singh's release'

DIBRUGARH, 5 JUN

SAll necessary legal steps were being taken to ensure the release of Amritpal Singh from jail, his lawyer Rajdeo Singh Khalsa said, a day after the radical Sikh preacher won the Khadoor Sahib Lok Sabha constituency in Punjab.

Khalsa along with Singh's wife Kirandeep Kaur on Wednesday met him at the Dibrugarh Central Jail where he has been lodged since April 2023. Singh, who fought the elections from jail as an Independent candidate, won the Khadoor Sahib seat by 1,97,120 votes, defeating Congress's Kulbir Singh Zira. "We have discussed the strategy but first of all his release is important for us and we are taking all necessary legal aid for this," Khalsa told reporters. He said Singh should soon be released as both the AAP government in Punjab and the NDA government at the Centre "have no other alternative". "The Sikh community voted for him because they have seen leadership quality in him and he can voice their concerns," Khalsa said. "Amritpal Singh had launched Amrit Sanchar for a drug-free Punjab and was doing a good job. —*PTI*

Rahul's call: Rae Bareli or Wayanad?

Rahul yet to decide the constituency he will represent

WAYANAD, 5 JUNE

The Wayanad Lok Sabha seat, where Rahul Gandhi won for the second time in a row, comprises three Assembly constituencies each in the tribal district of Wayanad and the Muslim-dominated Malappuram, as well as one in Kozhikode district where Christians hold a significant vote base.

Gandhi romped home with a margin of over 3.64 lakh votes against his nearest rival, Annie Raja of CPI.

Asked about which seat he would represent in Lok Sabha, Gandhi said on Tuesday, "I have won from both the seats and I want to wholeheartedly thank the voters of Rae Bareli and Wayanad.

"Now I have to decide which seat I will stay on, will discuss and then decide. Can't hold on to both the seats, but I haven't decided yet. I am being asked whether I would remain the MP of Wayanad or Rae Bareli, I want to remain MP for both. Congratulations to all of you," the former Congress president had said.

Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra arrive for the INDIA bloc leaders meeting on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

The BJP and the Left, who had fielded strong candidates to challenge Gandhi, claim he will abandon Wayanad if he wins from Rae Bareli in Uttar Pradesh.

Interestingly, there was no confirmation until the completion of the second phase of the election, when Kerala voted for Lok Sabha polls, about his plans to contest from another seat in the country's northern region.

—*PTI*

- The Wayanad Lok Sabha seat, where Rahul Gandhi won for the second time in a row, comprises three Assembly constituencies each in the tribal district of Wayanad and the Muslim-dominated Malappuram, as well as one in Kozhikode district where Christians hold a significant vote base.

3rd term: World leaders congratulate Modi

WASHINGTON/LONDON, 5 JUNE

US President Joe Biden, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and French President Emmanuel Macron were among dozens of world leaders who congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday on the victory of the BJP-led NDA coalition in the general elections and expressed their desire to work closely with him.

"Congratula tions to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the National Democratic Alliance on their victory, and the nearly 650 million voters in this historic election. The friendship between our nations is only growing as we unlock a shared future of unlimited potential," Biden said in his congratulatory message.

China also congratulated Modi on the victory and said it stands ready to work with India. British Prime Minister Sunak said he spoke to Modi and congratulated him. Noting that India has concluded the world's largest elections, Macron said, "Congratulations @NarendraModi, my dear friend. Together we will continue strengthening the strategic partnership that unites India and France."

Congratulations to @narendramodi on the new electoral victory and my warmest wishes for good work. Certain that we will continue to work together to strengthen the friendship that unites Italy and India and consolidate cooperation on the various issues that bind us, for the well-being of our Nations and our peoples," Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said in a post on X.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy welcomed the successful holding of the country. —*PTI*

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia congratulated Narendra Modi and said that Italy is willing to work together to strengthen the friendship **PHOTO: PTI**

Muslims failed to understand BSP, says Mayawati

LUCKNOW, 5 JUNE

After scoring a zilch in the Lok Sabha polls, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) President Mayawati on Wednesday said that despite the party giving it a "proper representation" in elections, the Muslim community is not able to understand BSP. Going forward, the party will give the community an electoral opportunity only after a lot of thought, she said.

BSP had failed to open its account in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections as well. It, however, bagged 10 seats in the 2019 one, which it had fought in alliance with the Samajwadi Party (SP). Mayawati in a statement said that her party will do a "deep analysis" of the trouncing and will take whatever steps that are necessary in the interest of the party. She expressed her gratitude to the Jatavs community, for supporting the party.

She said since the results are out, it is up to the future leaders of the country to think about the country's democracy, its interests, and the Constitution. She also raised her objection to the election being conducted in extreme heat and argued against the long-drawn election process which may become exhausting to the common people as well as the lakhs of government employees deployed on election duty. —*PTI*

ELECTS 2 CONG MPS

Manipur has been strife-torn since May last year when ethnic violence **PHOTO: ANI**

Manipur sent strong msg to BJP: Jairam

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Congress on Wednesday said the long-suffering people of Manipur have sent a "very powerful signal" by electing its leaders as MPs in both constituencies of the state.

He also asserted that this was a tribute to Rahul Gandhi's visits to the violence-hit state on 29 and 30 June, 2023, and to the launch of the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra on 14 January, 2024.

Congress won both the Lok Sabha seats in strife-torn Manipur on Tuesday.

Alfred Kanngam S Arthur won the Outer Manipur seat by 85,418 votes, defeating his nearest rival Kachui Timothy Zimik of the NPF. In the Inner Manipur seat, Angomcha Bimol Akoijam defeated his nearest rival Thounaojam Basantakumar of BJP by 1,09,801 votes.

On X, Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "It is also a tight slap on the face of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who simply refused to reach out to the people of Manipur and did not visit the state even for a few hours."

Manipur has been strife-torn since May last year when ethnic violence broke out after a march by Kuki tribals in the hill districts to protest against the valley-dominant Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribes status.

—*PTI*

Muraleedharan's poll debacle triggers row in Cong

T'PURAM, 5 JUNE

The massive drubbing of senior Congress leader K Muraleedharan in Thrissur Lok Sabha constituency has triggered a row in the state unit of the party as posters were put up on Wednesday criticising the district leadership for his "unexpected" defeat.

Muraleedharan on Tuesday announced that he won't contest elections anymore and would stay away from public life for some time. Several senior UDF leaders, including K C Venugopal, Shashi Tharoor and PK Kunhalikutty appealed to Muraleedharan not to get disappointed on his failure.

BJP candidate Suresh Gopi won from Thrissur constituency and CPI's Sunilkumar emerged second when the results were announced on Tuesday. Muraleedharan had to settle for the third position.

Shocked over the BJP's victory, a section of Youth Congress activists came out intensely criticising the district party leadership and sought their resignation for allegedly "opening doors for the Sangh Parivar forces" to the southern state.

Muraleedharan **PHOTO: PTI**

The posters said that there would be no seat for Prathapan, even in a ward in the central Kerala constituency.

As the results of the 26 April polls were announced by the Election Commission on Tuesday, Suresh Gopi won by a remarkable margin of 74,686, paving way for the saffron party to open its maiden account in the state for the lower house of Parliament.

He said that he wouldn't have felt this much disappointment if the Left candidate had won. Muraleedharan's sister Padmaja Venugopal, who recently defected to the BJP, on Wednesday said she had given a warning to her brother about some Congress leaders in the district.

—*PTI*

LS poll shows people rejected BJP's propaganda: Vijayan

T'PURAM, 5 JUNE

The 2024 Lok Sabha results were a heavy blow to BJP's efforts to allegedly subvert democracy and constitutional values and indicated that people have rejected the propaganda created in the saffron party's favour, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said on Wednesday.

Reacting to the poll results, Vijayan said the people of India have broken the BJP's delusion that it can safely move forward by using communalism and sectarianism to divide people.

In a statement, he said that the BJP's victory in Thrissur was being viewed very seriously and would be "critically evaluated". With regard to the outcome in Kerala, the Chief Minister conceded the LDF did not achieve the victory it had expected and that its performance was similar to that in the 2019 LS polls. In 2019 elections, the LDF won only from Alappuzha. This time it tasted success in the lone Alathur seat. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Cong lost more vote share than Left in Kerala: CPI(M)

T'PURAM, 5 JUNE

A day after the ruling Left in Kerala suffered a major setback in the Lok Sabha polls, the CPI(M) on Wednesday attempted to paint a brave face by claiming that the LDF only lost one per cent of its vote share as compared to 2019 results and it was the Congress-led UDF that lost five per cent of its votes.

CPI(M) state secretary MV Govindan claimed that the BJP was able to open its account in Kerala by winning the Thrissur Lok Sabha seat due to the Congress losing over 80,000 of its votes in that constituency.

He said that LDF gained around 6,000 votes as compared to 2019 in Thrissur and BJP won by a margin of over 74,000 votes this time."So, you do the maths," he told reporters here, taking a dig at Congress. Govindan also brushed aside queries whether the Left government in the state was in crisis following the defeat, saying "there will be victories and defeats". Congress won 14 seats and IUML-2. —*PTI*

CPI-M

PHOTO: PTI

73 women elected to Lok Sabha, lower than 2019

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

A total of 73 women have won the Lok Sabha elections, a slight dip from 78 elected in 2019.

Of the total women MPs elected to the Lower House from across the country, West Bengal is leading with 11 female MPs.

A total of 797 women candidates had contested the elections with the BJP fielding the maximum at 69 followed by Congress at 41.

This is the first election since the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill in the Parliament to reserve one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies for women. The law is yet to come into effect.With over 13.44 per cent female MPs, the 18th Lok Sabha will have one of the highest number of women members since 1952. The 17th Lok Sabha had the highest number of women parliamentarians at 78, constituting over 14 per cent of the total strength. BJP's Hema Malini, TMC's Mahua Moitra, NCP's Supriya Sule, and Samajwadi Party's (SP) Dimple Yadav retained their seats in the Lok Sabha polls, but candidates like Kangna Ranaut and Misha Bharati stole the show with their victories.

SP's 25-year-old candidate for Machhlishahr, Priya Saroj, and 29-year-old Iqra Choudhary of Kairana seat, were among the youngest nominees to secure a victory. —*PTI*

HYDERABAD TALES

Owaisi: An unyielding voice of Muslims

HYDERABAD, 5 JUNE

Asaduddin Owaisi, who was once the leader of a little-known outfit confined to the old city of Hyderabad, has emerged as a powerful voice of Muslims in the country in recent years.

On Tuesday, as the votes polled for the Hyderabad Lok Sabha constituency were counted, he defeated his BJP rival Madhavi Latha by a big margin of over 3.38 lakh votes, in what is seen as a testament to the iron grip of the Owaisi family over the old city.

Unfazed by criticism that he is "B team of BJP", Owaisi has been making efforts to expand the party's footprint across the country albeit with limited success. Under his stewardship, the AIMIM has secured electoral wins in states, including Maharashtra and Bihar.

Asaduddin Owaisi **PHOTO: PTI**

Though he is seen as a highly polarizing figure, Owaisi, a lawyer and Bar-at-Law from Lincoln's Inn, London, is a highly effective communicator in Urdu and English who can make his opponents defensive. The fact that he does not hesitate to tread the lonely path was witnessed when he and his Lok Sabha colleague Imtiaz Jaleel were the only two members who voted against the women's reservation bill in Lok Sabha. —*PTI*

Madhavi Latha: A Hindutva proponent who garnered some attention in Hyd

HYDERABAD, 5 JUNE

Multi-faceted personality and BJP pick for Hyderabad to take on its long-time MP Asaduddin Owaisi, K Madhavi Latha, is said to have given a run for his money in the May 13 Lok Sabha polls. Latha lost to Owaisi with a margin of over 3.38 lakh votes. She has the image of being a strong Hindutva proponent. Madhavi Latha, as a social activist, had collaborated with several Muslim women groups on triple talaq. She had also created a fund for destitute Muslim women. —*PTI*

K Madhavi Latha **PHOTO: PTI**

TMC wins Muslim-majority pockets in South Bengal

KOLKATA, 5 JUNE

People belonging to the minority community helped TMC sweep Muslim-majority pockets in the southern region of West Bengal while the division of their votes facilitated BJP's victories in the northern part of the state, political analysts said on Wednesday.

In a state where minority voters constitute around 30 per cent of the electorate, their influence extends to 16-18 Lok Sabha seats, making them a coveted voting bloc for all parties.

Several parliamentary seats in both north and south Bengal, such as Raiganj, Cooch Behar, Balurghat, Malda North, Malda South, Murshidabad, Diamond Harbour, Uluberia, Howrah, Birbhum, Kanthi, Tamluk, Mathurapur and Joynagar, have significant Muslim populations.

BJP retained Balurghat, Raiganj and Malda North, riding on the division of minority votes between Left-Congress combine and TMC, an analyst said. "But in some seats in north Bengal, the party faced tough competition from Left-Congress alliance for a bigger pie of the minority votes," Political analyst Biswanath Chakraborty said.

In all three seats, the Left-Congress alliance candidates bagged more votes than the BJP nominees' victory margins. According to poll results declared on Tuesday, BJP's Kartik Chandra Paul bagged 5,60,897 votes in Raiganj and his nearest rival TMC's Krishna Kalyani got 4,92,700.

Paul won by a margin of 68,197 votes.

The Left-Congress alliance candidate Ali Imran Ramz secured 2,63,273 votes.

The icing on the cake for TMC, however, was wresting the prized Baharampur Lok Sabha seat from its five-term sitting MP and Congress state President Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury. Owing to Chowdhury's defeat in Baharampur, which remained among the last-standing perceived Congress fortresses of the state, the Trinamool Congress had its flag grafted and flying from the region for the first time. —*PTI*

Several seats in both north and south Bengal have significant Muslim populations **PHOTO: PTI**

PHOTO: PTI

Puri firecracker explosion toll rises to 15

BHUBANESWAR, 5 JUNE

The death toll in the Puri firecracker explosion in Odisha rose to 15 as two more persons succumbed to their burn injuries, according to the special relief commissioner on Wednesday. Presently, 12 people injured in the explosion are undergoing treatment in various hospitals in Puri, Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, it said, adding that nine injured have been discharged from the health facilities. Altogether 36 people were injured in the explosion of a stockpile of firecrackers that happened during Lord Jagannath's 'Chandan Yatra', a ritual, on the night of 29 May 29 in Puri.—*PTI*

32 new diarrhoea cases in Himachal, total climbs to 242

HAMIRPUR, 5 JUNE

Thirty-two fresh cases of diarrhoea were reported in five villages in Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur, taking the total number of patients in the district to 242, an official said on Wednesday. Diarrhoea has spread to 12 villages in five gram panchayats—Lambloo, Bafrin, Chamned, Gasota and Pandher —having a population of around 4,550. Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr R K Agnihotri said 32 fresh cases of diarrhoea were detected till Tuesday night, taking the total number of patients in Hamirpur district to 242. While 103 patients were discharged after medication, 14 are hospitalised and 125 are taking treatment at home, he said. Agnihotri said six water samples were collected by the health department and sent to the Hamirpur Medical College for analysis. He advised people to drink boiled water.—*PTI*

History sheeter shot dead in UP, accused on the run

MEERUT, 5 JUNE

A 30-year-old history sheeter was allegedly shot dead by another criminal here when he had gone to a swimming pool, police said on Wednesday. The accused, Bilal, is absconding and efforts are on to nab him, they added. The victim, Arshad, was a history sheeter with 18 cases lodged against him, police said. The incident took place in the Lohia Nagar area here on Tuesday night. Near the pool, Arshad had an argument with Bilal who shot him as the altercation escalated, the officer said, adding that the entire episode got captured in the CCTV installed there. Bilal, too, had a number of cases, including murder, pending against him.—*PTI*

Rly employee, wife jump before train with 2 children

JABALPUR, 5 JUNE

A railway trackman and his wife along with their two children jumped in front a moving train in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur on Wednesday, police said. The incident took place on a railway track in Sihoda. The reason behind it was not yet known. The bodies of Narendra Chadhar, resident of Sihoda village, his wife Reena, and two daughters aged 6 years and 3 months, were found on the railway track while his motorcycle was found parked nearby, police said. It seems they committed suicide, the official said, adding the incident was being probed from all angles. Narendra Chadhar's father-in-law Shankar Lal Chadhar told reporters that his daughter Reena called on Tuesday and told him about a dispute between her and her mother-in-law but he did not pay heed as it was a usual and internal family matter. The man said he has no information what led his son-in-law and daughter to take the extreme step. —*PTI*

Never faced any political pressure, says CJI

He claims judges reflect sense of values amid elections

OXFORD, 5 JUNE

While elections lie at the core of India's constitutional democracy, judges reflect a sense of continuity of constitutional values that protect the system, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud has said.

Addressing the famous Oxford Union Society here on Tuesday on the topic of the humanising role adjudicators can play in society, he highlighted the role of technology in injecting greater transparency into the judicial system.

Acknowledging some of the "unfair" criticism aimed at judges on social media, he asserted that the overall impact of technology is to help the judiciary reach out to a wider section of society.

Asked about political and societal pressures he may have faced while handing down judgments, he stated that he has never faced a "sense of political pressure

CJI DY Chandrachud at University of Oxford, on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

from the powers that be" in his 24 years as a judge.

"We live lives, which are relatively isolated from the political arm of the government ... but obviously judges have to be conversant with the impact of their decisions on the polity at large. That's not political pressure but an understanding by the court of the likely impact of a decision," he said.

Chief Justice Chandrachud, who took questions from the student audience members, was asked about the Supreme Court's Special Marriage Act judgment that ruled against legalising same-sex marriage in India last year.

"I'm not here to defend the judgment because, as a judge, I believe once a judgment is delivered, it becomes the property of not just the nation but global humanity. The Special Marriage Act was a law enacted by Parliament, which contemplates a marriage in a heterosexual relationship," he said, going on to share that he was in the minority in that case in a certain specific aspect as he was in favour of recognising civil unions for same-sex couples "until such time as Parliament stepped in".

> **We live lives, which are relatively isolated from the political arm of the government ... but obviously judges have to be conversant with the impact of their decisions on the polity at large. That's not political pressure but an understanding by the court of the likely impact of a decision**
>
> -DY Chandrachud, Chief Justice of India

"Three of my colleagues didn't agree with us because they felt even the recognition of same-sex unions was beyond the purview of the court ... What happens in courts in modern democracies is not really to be looked at in terms of the substantive outcomes of the case. The court is involved in a continuous process of dialogue, not only with the litigating parties but a dialogue with civil society," he said. This was the main motivation behind his decision to livestream important constitutional cases, he added.

"We need to take the process of justice and the administration of law to the homes and the hearts of people," he said. —*PTI*

Kerala introduces gender neutrality in school textbooks

T' PURAM, 5 JUNE

A father grating coconut in the kitchen and cooking snacks for his daughter may sound a bit odd in a patriarchal society.

But what if the message appears in school textbooks?

That is what has happened in Kerala, where the state government has introduced innovative textbooks comprising gender neutral messages.

The objective is to inculcate the message of gender neutrality in the minds of children, authorities said.

As schools in the state reopened on Monday after two month-long summer vacation, the textbooks, with pictorial representation of family members cutting across genders involved in cooking and other kitchen chores, are drawing widespread attention.

The innovative textbooks caught wide attention after state General Education Minister V Sivankutty shared a page from one of such textbooks in his Facebook post the other day.

The Minister shared the page from the Malayalam medium textbook of Class 3 which shows the father sitting on the floor grating coconut while the mother is seen cooking dishes.

In the English textbook, the father could be seen cooking snacks for the daughter.

Teachers and students wholeheartedly welcomed the gender equality concept included in textbooks and hailed it as a "positive" step.

Pavithra Krishna, a lower primary student of a government school in nearby Vithura, said was amused seeing the pictures in her new Malayalam textbook. "I was turning the pages of the new book and was surprised to see the pictures of a father scraping coconut in the kitchen. I showed this to my father and asked why he doesn't do this at home," she told PTI. —*PTI*

HOSPITAL ON FIRE

Firefighters douse a fire which broke out at an eye hospital in Lajpat Nagar New Delhi on Thursday *PHOTO: PTI*

Pune crash: Mom's blood samples replaced with teen's, says report

PUNE, 5 JUNE

A forensic laboratory report has confirmed that blood samples of the mother were used to replace those of the 17-year-old driver involved in the Porsche crash which claimed two lives here, police told a court on Wednesday.

The sessions court extended the police custody of the teen's parents till 10 June on the police's request.

Two doctors and an employee of the Sassoon General Hospital here were arrested last month for allegedly replacing the minor's blood samples following the accident on May 19 to show that he was not drunk at the time. It is alleged that one of the doctors was in touch with the teen's father.

The teen's mother was arrested on the conspiracy charges on 1 June. Police on Wednesday produced the parents of the minor, the two doctors and the hospital employee before the court after their police custody got over. The court extended the custody of the doctors and the hospital employee till 7 June. Police have also moved an application before the Juvenile Justice Board seeking extension for 14 days of the remand of the 17-year-old who is lodged at an observation home. His remand ends on Wednesday. —*PTI*

A drunk 17-year-old Porsche driver crashed into 2 techies in Pune, killing them *PHOTO: PTI*

- The teen's mother was arrested on the conspiracy charges on 1 June. Police on Wednesday produced the parents of the minor, the two doctors and the hospital employee before the court.

DELHI TO TORONTO AI CANADA FLIGHT GETS BOMB THREAT

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Panic gripped an Air Canada Toronto-bound flight after the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport here received an email claiming a bomb had been planted on the airplane, officials said on Wednesday.

The threat turned out to be a hoax.

Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) office received an email at 10.50 pm on Tuesday stating that a bomb had been planted in the Delhi-Toronto Air Canada flight, the officials said.

"Following standard security protocols, a thorough inspection was conducted and nothing suspicious was found," a senior police officer said.

Legal action in the matter is being taken, he said. —*PTI*

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Climate change affecting lives, livelihoods: Prez

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

On the occasion of World Environment Day, President Droupadi Murmu said on Wednesday that climate change is affecting lives and livelihoods and called for collective efforts to build a better and greener world based on sustainability.

> **We are trustees and not owners of natural resources. Climate change is affecting lives and livelihoods, particularly in vulnerable communities. Let us make collective efforts for building a better and greener world based on sustainability**
>
> -Droupadi Murmu, President

In a post on X, she said protecting Mother Earth is everyone's fundamental responsibility.

"We are trustees and not owners of natural resources. Climate change is affecting lives and livelihoods, particularly in vulnerable communities. Let us make collective efforts for building a better and greener world based on sustainability," Murmu said.

World Environment Day is celebrated on June 5 every year. —*PTI*

9 Naxalites held for planting IED device in Chhattisgarh cop's car

BIJAPUR, 5 JUNE

Nine Naxalites, five of them allegedly involved in triggering an IED blast targeting the car of a police official last month, have been arrested from two places in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, police said on Wednesday.

While five Naxalites were arrested from Mandem-Kuprel villages under Farsegarh police station area, four others were held from Madded police station limits, the police said.

Those held from Farsegarh, identified as Guddu Kumma, 25; Budhu Kumma, 30; Suresh Oyam, 29; Vinod Korsa, 25; and Munna Kumma, 25, were allegedly involved in triggering the IED blast targeting a car in which two policemen were travelling in Farsegarh area on 15 May, it said.

They were also involved in murders, cutting roads, extorting illegal levy and putting up Maoist posters and banners, it added.

Station House Officer of Farsegarh police station Akash Masih and constable Sanjay, who were in the car, had escaped unhurt, while the blast caused damage to the bonnet of the vehicle, it said.

All five cadres were carrying a reward of Rs 10,000 each on their heads, it said.

Of the four others apprehended from Madded, Lachhu Punem was active as a Madded area committee member of Maoists and carried a reward of Rs 5 lakh on his head, he said.

These four were allegedly trying to plant an IED on both sides of a road near Somanpalli and Bandepara, it said.

Explosive, safety fuse, gelatin sticks, Maoist pamphlets and banners were recovered from them, it said. —*PTI*

A police vehicle was blown up in Wednesday's IED explosion by Naxals killing10 policemen, in Dantewada *PHOTO: PTI*

DU RANKED 328

IIT Bombay & Delhi among top 150 varsities in world: QS Ranking

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) Bombay and Delhi are among the top 150 universities in the world, while the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) retained the top rank globally for the 13th time, according to the QS World University Ranking, 2025 announced on Wednesday.

While IIT Bombay has climbed from 149 last year to 118, up by 31 ranks, IIT Delhi improved its rank by 47 points to bag the 150th position globally.

According to the coveted ranking published by the London-based higher education analyst, Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), Delhi University stood out for the employability of its graduates and has been ranked 44th globally in the category of "employment outcomes".

Boasting 46 universities in this edition of the rankings, the Indian Higher Education system is the seventh most represented globally and the third in Asia, trailing only Japan (49 universities) and China (Mainland) (71 universities).

India has one more university within the top 150 rankings, IIT Delhi (150th) and two more entries in the world's top 400 with the University of Delhi (ranked 328th) and Anna University (ranked 383rd) making their debut in this tier.

The QS highlighted that despite the achievements, India faces challenges in internationalisation *PHOTO: PTI*

"India's Employment Outcomes score is 10 points below the global average of 23.8, reflecting the need to bridge the gap between job requirements and graduates' skills and to create more opportunities for new graduates.

"Additionally, India's sustainability score is also about 10 points below the global average and highlights the need to prioritise and strengthen sustainability initiatives within the higher education system," a senior QS official said. The QS highlighted that despite the achievements, India faces challenges in internationalisation.

"The country lags in the International Faculty Ratio and International Student Ratio indicators, underscoring the need for greater international collaboration and exchange. India's score for the proportion of international students is a mere 2.9, significantly below the global average of 26.5. —*PTI*

ENVIRONMENT DAY

Garbage being cleared from a dumpyard on World Environment Day, in Jammu, on Wednesday. Every year on 5 June, the world observes World Environment Day to increase public awareness of climate change and its effects on human health, wildlife, and flora
PHOTO: PTI

Why Modi failed to win outright majority

LS POLLS

The Lok Sabha election results are a personal blow to Narendra Modi, who has always secured majorities in elections as both Chief Minister of Gujarat and as Indian Prime Minister
PHOTO: PTI

Prime Minister elect Narendra Modi has won a third consecutive term in a much tighter general election than anticipated.

BJP looks set to fall short of a majority and is leading in the 543-seat parliament, below the required 272 seats. However its coalition partners have gained additional seats.

The results are a personal blow to Modi, who has always secured majorities in elections as both Chief Minister of Gujarat and as Indian Prime Minister, and dominated the country's politics for a decade.

The verdict marks a surprising revival for Congress Party-led INDIA Opposition alliance, defying earlier predictions of its decline, and sharply diverging from both exit polls and pre-election surveys.

More than 640 million people voted in a marathon seven-week election, hailed as a "world record" by election authorities. Nearly half of the voters were women.

The Opposition has staged a remarkable comeback under Rahul Gandhi.

Many world leaders have crawled across the finishing line in their third term elections and Modi is no exception. BJP remains India's single largest party by seats, and if Modi secures a third term with his allies, he will match the record of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first premier.

But the significant loss of seats for his party - more than 50 - dims the allure of a third term, especially given Modi's campaign targeting 400 coalition seats, making anything less seem like an under-achievement.

This has led to jubilation in Congress camp and some despair in BJP quarters. Despite BJP emerging as the single largest party, the burden of hype and expectations has left many of their supporters disheartened

To his Hindu nationalist base, Modi delivered on key manifesto promises: revoking the autonomy of Indian-administered Kashmir, building the Ram temple in Ayodhya and implementing a controversial citizenship law. Many BJP-ruled states have implemented laws tightening regulations on interfaith marriages. Modi appealed to his Hindu nationalist base by building the Ram temple in Ayodhya

BJP's significant drop in seats may be linked to joblessness, rising prices, growing inequality and a controversial army recruitment reform, among other things. Modi's harsh and divisive campaign, particularly targeting Muslims, could also have alienated voters in some regions.

His ambitious slogan "Ab ki baar, 400 paar," aiming for more than 400 seats for his NDA alliance, may have backfired, with such a massive majority raising fears of constitutional changes among the poor.

Modi's party faced its largest setback in Uttar Pradesh. With 80 parliamentary seats, UP holds significant sway in national politics - many consider it the gateway to Delhi. Both Mr Modi and Rahul Gandhi hold seats there.

India has a history of chaotic coalition governments, although some in the early 1990s and 2000s played a significant role in implementing economic reforms.

If BJP forms the government, it will be dependent on allies and will need to adopt a more consultative and deliberative approach.

This dependency makes it vulnerable to collapse if allies feel neglected. The party, once perceived as all-powerful, is now reliant on allies, unlike in 2014 and 2019.

In February, the diverse coalition known as INDIA, short for Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance, faced turmoil when one of its key leaders, Nitish Kumar, exited - only to later rejoin BJP.

But led by Rahul Gandhi, Opposition ran a spirited campaign and narrowed the gap, in the face of a partisan media and despite fewer resources.

There is more hope for them ahead. BJP holds about a third of India's 4,000- plus state assembly seats and has lost to regional parties before. Over the next 14 months, five states are set for elections - all could be keenly contested.

With contests in Maharashtra, Jharkhand, and Haryana this year, BJP could face substantial competition. Delhi's upcoming election may pose challenges, while Bihar in October presents a regional hurdle.

The economy, fueled by government spending, is on the upswing. Yet inequality is rising. Private investment and consumption must increase, and the poor and the middle class will need more money in their pockets to spend more. That will not happen if there are not enough jobs.

In a country bristling with ambition and frustration, younger voters are likely to drift from BJP – around two-fifths of India's billion-plus people are under 25.

But third terms have often proved to be rocky for many leaders, with unforeseen and unpredictable events blowing governments and their plans off course.

—BBC News

LETTERS write to us at salar@salar.news

SALAR سالار

Groundwater to get over 3°C warmer by century's end

Warming of groundwater can adversely impact ecosystems relying on them
PHOTO: PTI

Groundwater is projected to warm by 2-3.5 degrees Celsius before the turn of this century, potentially risking water quality and safety, apart from threatening ecosystems depending on the resource, a new research has found.

The "world's first global groundwater temperature model" predicted the highest warming rates in Central Russia, Northern China and parts of North America, and the Amazon rainforest in South America.

A team of researchers, led by those from the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Germany, said while a lot of focus on climate change concerns weather events and water availability, we also need to think about how it impacts groundwater, critical to life on the planet.

Warming of groundwater can adversely impact ecosystems relying on them, they said.

"Rivers rely on groundwater to keep flowing during dry times. Warm waters hold less dissolved oxygen," explained study co-author Gabriel Rau from the University of Newcastle, UK.

The model also estimated that by 2100, 60-600 million people globally could be living in areas where groundwater exceeds the highest threshold for drinking water temperature guidelines set by any country.

According to the World Health Organization, currently only 18 out of 125 countries have temperature guidelines for drinking water.

Warmer groundwater raises the risk of disease-causing microbial growth, thereby, affecting drinking water quality and potentially the lives of people, said Rau.

- According to the World Health Organization, currently only 18 out of 125 countries have temperature guidelines for drinking water

"This is especially concerning in areas where access to clean drinking water is already limited, and in areas where groundwater is consumed without treatment," he added.

Based on how heat spreads in water, the researchers modelled current groundwater temperatures and also projected changes between 2000-2100 around the world. Groundwater is present beneath the Earth's surface in pore spaces in rocks and soils. "We show that groundwater at the depth of the water table (excluding permafrost regions) is conservatively projected to warm on average by 2.1 degrees Celsius between 2000 and 2100 under a medium emissions (scenario)," the authors wrote in the study published in the journal Nature Geoscience. Under this scenario, emissions trends do not markedly change from historical patterns.

The model, however, showed that under a high-emissions scenario, or fossil fuel-driven development, the groundwater temperature could rise by 3.5 degrees Celsius. The warming of groundwater can be a cause for concern, although it depends on whether the climate change issue can be mitigated by cutting down greenhouse gas emissions, the researchers said.

Warmer groundwater can also impact water quality by affecting its chemistry and microbiology, they said.

"If temperatures increase, we may see significant impacts to our local aquatic animals, including their spawning processes which will impact industries and communities that are reliant on these ecosystems," said co-author Dylan Irvine, Charles Darwin University, Australia.

—PTI

According to the study, warmer groundwater can also impact water quality by affecting its chemistry and microbiology
PHOTO: UNSPLASH

Study finds no evidence of climate change acceleration amid heat rise

In 2023, the rate of warming hit 0.26 degrees Celsius, up from 0.25 degrees Celsius the year before
PHOTO: PTI

The rate Earth is warming hit an all-time high in 2023 with 92 per cent of last year's surprising record-shattering heat caused by humans, top scientists calculated.

The group of 57 scientists from around the world used United Nations-approved methods to examine what was behind last year's deadly burst of heat. They said even with a faster warming rate they don't see evidence of significant acceleration in human-caused climate change beyond increased fossil fuel burning.

Last year's record temperatures were so unusual that scientists have been debating what was behind the big jump and whether climate change is accelerating or if other factors are in play.

"If you look at this world accelerating or going through a big tipping point, things aren't doing that," study lead author Piers Forster, a Leeds University climate scientist, said. "Things are increasing in temperature and getting worse in sort of exactly the way we predicted."

It's pretty much explained by the buildup of carbon dioxide from rising fossil fuel use, he and a co-author said.

Last year, the rate of warming hit 0.26 degrees Celsius per decade -- up from 0.25 degrees Celsius the year before. That's not a significant difference, though it does make this year's rate the highest ever, Forster said.

Still, outside scientists said this report highlights an ever more alarming situation.

"Choosing to act on climate has become a political talking point but this report should be a reminder to people that in fact it is fundamentally a choice to save human lives," said University of Wisconsin climate scientist Andrea Dutton, who wasn't part of the international study team. "To me, that is something worth fighting for."

The team of authors -- formed to provide annual scientific updates between the every seven- to eight-year major UN scientific assessments -- determined last year was 1.43 degrees Celsius warmer than the 1850 to 1900 average with 1.31 degrees of that coming from human activity. The other 8 per cent of the warming was due mostly to El Nino, the natural and temporary warming of the central Pacific that changes weather worldwide and also a freak warming along the Atlantic and just other weather randomness.

On a larger 10-year time frame, which scientists prefer to single years, the world has warmed about 1.19 degrees Celsius since pre-industrial times, the report in the journal Earth System Science Data found.

The report also said that as the world keeps using coal, oil and natural gas, Earth is likely to reach the point in 4.5 years that it can no longer avoid crossing the internationally accepted threshold for warming: 1.5 degrees Celsius.

That fits with earlier studies projecting Earth being committed or stuck to at least 1.5 degrees by early 2029 if emission trajectories don't change. The actual hitting of 1.5 degrees could be years later but it would be inevitable if all that carbon is used, Forster said.

It's not the end of the world or humanity if temperatures blow past the 1.5 limit but it will be quite bad, scientists said.

Past UN studies show massive changes to Earth's ecosystem are more likely to kick in between 1.5 and 2 degrees Celsius of warming, including eventual loss of the planet's coral reefs, Arctic sea ice, species of plants and animals -- along with nastier extreme weather events that kill people.

Last year's temperature rise was more than just a little jump. It was especially unusual in September, said study co-author Sonia Seneviratne, head of land-climate dynamics at ETH Zurich, a Swiss university.

The year was within the range of what was predicted, albeit it was at the upper edge of the range, Seneviratne said.

"Acceleration if it were to happen would be even worse, like hitting a global tipping point, it would be probably the worst scenario," Seneviratne said. "But what is happening is already extremely bad and it is having major impacts already now. We are in the middle of a crisis."

University of Michigan environment dean Jonathan Overpeck and Berkeley Earth climate scientist Zeke Hausfather, neither of whom were part of the study, said they still see acceleration. Hausfather pointed out the rate of warming is considerably higher than 0.18 degrees Celsius per decade of warming that it was between 1970 and 2010.

Scientists had theorised a few explanations for the massive jump in September, which Hausfather called "gobsmacking". Wednesday's report didn't find enough warming from other potential causes. The report said the reduction of sulphur pollution from shipping -- which had been providing some cooling to the atmosphere -- was overwhelmed last year by carbon particles put in the air from Canadian wildfires.

The report also said an undersea volcano that injected massive amounts of heat-trapping water vapour into the atmosphere also spewed cooling particles with both forces pretty much cancelling each other out.

Texas Tech climate scientist and chief scientist at the Nature Conservancy Katharine Hayhoe said "the future is in our hands. It's us -- not physics but humans -- who will determine how quickly the world warms and by how much".

—PTI

PHOTO: X @FIREHORSE249791

Flood death toll increases to 30 in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO, 5 JUNE

At least 30 people have died due to extreme rains and floods that have devastated Sri Lanka since 15 May, State Minister of Defence Premitha Bandara Tennakoon told Parliament on Wednesday. Heavy monsoonal showers have destroyed 71 houses while another 9,300 suffered partial damage. Some 825 small and medium-scale industries have suffered damages alongside 63 infrastructure system setups, Tannakoon said. The deaths have been reported from 10 districts, including the capital Colombo, where torrential rains exceeding 300 mm caused flash floods, fallen trees, high winds, lightning, and earth slips. The Disaster Management Centre has issued flood warnings for the basins of several rivers from different districts. *—PTI*

1st phase of new capital is 80% done: Indonesia

JAKARTA, 5 JUNE

Indonesian President Joko Widodo on Wednesday said construction of the first phase of the country's ambitious new capital is 80 per cent complete and he will have an office there once clean water is available next month. "I am very optimistic about the office. We are still waiting for one more thing, the water, in July," Widodo said in front of the construction site of the new presidential palace in Nusantara on the island of Borneo.

Widodo told reporters during his visit to Nusantara that the new capital will be officially inaugurated during celebrations for the republic's 79th Independence Day in August. Widodo has been in Nusantara since Tuesday, a day after the surprise resignations of the head of the Nusantara Capital Authority, Bambang Susantono, along with his deputy, Dhony Rahajoe, for unexplained reasons. *—AP*

Prominent Pakistani rights activist arrested

ISLAMABAD, 5 JUNE

Prominent Pakistani human rights activist Sarim Burney was arrested on Wednesday on human trafficking charges by the country's top investigation agency based on a complaint by the US government, according to media reports. The Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) Anti-Human Trafficking Team apprehended Burney immediately upon his arrival at the Karachi Airport from the US, Geo News reported. Citing sources, the report said that the rights activist was arrested on the complaint of the United States government and is accused of trafficking more than 25 children to America and illegally getting the children adopted there. *—PTI*

Taiwan detects 26 Chinese military aircrafts, 10 ships

TAIPEI, 5 JUNE

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence detected 26 Chinese military aircraft and 10 naval vessels around the nation between 6 am 4 June and 6 am on 5 June, reported Taiwan News. 19 out of 26 Chinese military Aircraft crossed the median line, which bisects the Taiwan Strait and separates the island from China. According to MND, Taiwan also sent aircraft and naval ships and deployed coastal-based missile systems to monitor PLA activity in response to the Chinese move. Since September 2020, China has increased its use of gray zone tactics by incrementally increasing the number of military aircraft and naval ships operating around Taiwan. Grey zone tactics are defined as "an effort or series of efforts beyond steady-state deterrence and assurance that attempts to achieve one's security objectives without resort to direct and sizable use of force." *—ANI*

Israel hit buildings with white phosphorous: Activists

They said Israel has violated the international law in Lebanon

BEIRUT, 5 JUNE

Israel's use of white phosphorous "violates international humanitarian law", Human Rights Watch reports following attacks on Gaza and Lebanon. PHOTO: X@TAMILGUARDIAN

A global human rights group claimed that Israel has used white phosphorus incendiary shells on residential buildings in at least five towns and villages in conflict-hit southern Lebanon, possibly harming civilians and violating international law, in a report published on Wednesday.

Human Rights Watch said in its report that there was no evidence of burn injuries due to white phosphorus in Lebanon, but that researchers had "heard accounts indicating possible respiratory damage". Human rights advocates say it's a crime under international law to fire the controversial munitions into populated areas.

Israel maintains it uses the white phosphorus only as a smokescreen and not to target civilians. The white-hot chemical substance can set buildings on fire and burn human flesh down to the bone. Survivors are at risk of infections and organ or respiratory failure, even if their burns are small.

The HRW report includes interviews with eight residents in conflict-hit southern Lebanon, and the group says it has verified and geolocated images from almost 47 photos and videos that show white phosphorus shells landing on residential buildings in five Lebanese border towns and villages.

The Lebanese Health Ministry says at least 173 people have required medical care after exposure to white phosphorus.

The researchers found that the controversial incendiaries were used in residential areas in Kfar Kila, Mays al-Jabal, Boustan, Markaba, and Aita al-Shaab, towns that are among the hardest-hit in eight months of fighting.

The New York-based rights group alongside Amnesty International also accused Israel of using white phosphorus in residential areas in October 2023, less than a month after clashes began between the Israeli military and the powerful Hezbollah group along the southern Lebanon-Israel border, a day after the Israel-Hamas war broke out on 7 October.

In its report, HRW called on the Lebanese government to allow the International Criminal Court to investigate and prosecute "grave international crimes" within Lebanon since October 2023. "Israel's recent use of white phosphorus in Lebanon should motivate other countries to take immediate action toward this goal," said HRW Lebanon Researcher Ramzi Kaiss.

At least 400 people have been killed in Lebanon, most of them fighters but also including more than 70 civilians and non-combatants. In Israel, 15 soldiers and 10 civilians have been killed since October. *—AP*

MEXICO ELECTIONS

Mayor killed after first woman elected leader

MEXICO CITY, 5 JUNE

Yolanda Sánchez PHOTO: FB

Gunmen have killed the female mayor of a town in Mexico just hours after the country celebrated the election of Claudia Sheinbaum as the nation's first woman President.

Yolanda Sánchez was shot in the town of Cotija, which she had governed since September 2021. She was the first woman to be elected to the post.

Widespread violence against politicians has overshadowed Mexico's general election, which saw two women run for the presidency. Yolanda Sánchez was ambushed by gunmen in the centre of Cotija, Michoacán, on Monday.

Local media say she was shot 19 times and died in hospital shortly after the attack. Her bodyguard was also killed in the gun battle. No arrests have been made so far in connection with the attack but it is widely thought that the gunmen belonged to an organised crime group.

Sánchez had reported receiving death threats after taking up office in September 2021. She was held for three days by armed men who had seized her at gunpoint during a visit to the neighbouring state of Jalisco in 2023.

While she said that she did not know what criminal group they belonged to, local newspapers said the most likely culprits where the Jalisco New Generation cartel (CJNG). The CJNG engages in drug trafficking as well as kidnapping for ransom and extortion.

It is also infamous for targeting public officials who refuse to do its bidding. Sánchez had said that the men who had threatened her after she had taken office had demanded that she hand the security of the town over to state police officers in the pay of organised crime groups. *—BBC News*

German far-right party member stabbed & injured

BERLIN, 5 JUNE

A member of a German far-right party was stabbed and wounded in the southwestern city of Mannheim, German news agency dpa reported on Wednesday, only days after a knife attack killed one police officer and left five other people injured in the same city.

The stabbing happened late Tuesday, reportedly near the same market square where the earlier attack took place on Friday.

Dpa reported that a candidate with the far-right Alternative for Germany, or AfD, reportedly caught somebody trying to tear down an election poster. When he confronted that person, he was attacked with a knife. Dpa reported that the AfD politician was still in a hospital with non-life-threatening cuts. The candidate, who was campaigning for local elections on Sunday, was not identified. Mannheim police confirmed that an incident took place on Tuesday night and said they would release more details later, dpa reported.

A25-year-old Afghan man stabbed several members of a group that describes itself as opposing "political Islam". The group, Pax Europa, describes itself as an organisation that informs the public about the dangers posed by the "increasing spread and influence of political Islam". *—AP*

US flies B-1B bomber for 1st drill in 7 years

SEOUL, 5 JUNE

The United States flew a long-range B-1B bomber over the Korean Peninsula on Wednesday for its first precision-guided bombing drill with South Korea in seven years, the South said Wednesday.

The US B-1B bomber conducted joint aerial drills with other US and South Korean fighter jets, South Korea's Defence Ministry said in a statement.

It said the B-1B bomber dropped Joint Direct Attack Munitions during the training while being escorted by South Korean jets, the first such bombing drill since 2017.

The JDAM bombs include "bunker-busters." JDAM is a guidance system that converts unguided, conventional bombs into more precise, GPS-guided weapons. All US fighter jets, bombers and drones can use JDAMs, and the munitions are among the weapons systems the United States has been providing to Ukraine to help it fight Russia's invasion.

The US B-1B bomber conducted joint aerial drills with other US and South Korean fighter jets PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

The drill is seen as a show of force against North Korea amid rising tensions over its recent launches of trash-carrying balloons toward South Korea. North Korea is sensitive to drills of bunker-buster bombs, which could threaten its leadership.

A B-1B is capable of carrying a large conventional weapons payload. North Korean has previously called the bomber's deployment proof of US hostility and responded with missile tests.

In the past week, North Korea floated hundreds of huge balloons containing manure, cigarette butts, scraps of cloth, dead batteries and reportedly dirty diapers across the border into South Korea. *—AP*

Gunman attempts attack on US Embassy in Lebanon

Lebanese security stand guard on a road that leads to the US Embassy in Aukar, a northern suburb of Beirut, Lebanon on Wednesday PHOTO: PTI

BEIRUT, 5 JUNE

A gunman was captured by Lebanese soldiers after attempting to attack the US Embassy near Beirut on Wednesday, the military said.

The attack took place as tensions continued to simmer in the tiny Mediterranean country, where months of fighting between Hezbollah militants and Israeli troops has displaced thousands along the border, following years of political deadlock and economic hardship.

The Lebanese military in a statement said that soldiers shot an assailant, who they only described as a Syrian national. The gunman was wounded and taken to a hospital.

The shooters motives were not clear. However, Lebanese media have published photos that appear to show a bloodied attacker wearing a black vest with the words "Islamic State" written in Arabic and the English initials "I" and "S".

Local media reported that there was a gunfight for almost half an hour by the US diplomatic mission in the suburb of Aukar, north of Beirut.

One shooter was killed, one escaped, and the third was wounded and detained by the Lebanese military. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not cleared to speak to the press.

The US Embassy said the morning attack by the embassy's entrance did not cause any casualties among their staff, and that Lebanese troops and embassy security mobilised quickly. *—AP*

TRIP TO THE INT'L SPACE STATION

NASA astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore pose for a photo after leaving the operations and checkout building for a trip to launch pad at Space Launch Complex 41 on Wednesday PHOTO: PTI

EMIRATI LEADER MEETS WITH TALIBAN OFFICIAL

DUBAI, 5 JUNE

The leader of the United Arab Emirates met on Tuesday with an official in the Taliban government still wanted by the United States on an up-to USD 10 million bounty over his involvement in an attack that killed an American citizen and other assaults.

The meeting highlights the growing divide internationally on how to deal with the Taliban, who seized control of Afghanistan in 2021 and since have barred girls from attending school beyond the sixth grade and otherwise restricted women's role in public life. While the West still doesn't recognise the Taliban as Kabul's government, nations in the Mideast and elsewhere have reached out to them.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the ruler of Abu Dhabi, met Sirajuddin Haqqani at the Qasr Al Shati palace in the Emirati capital, the state-run WAM news agency reported. It published an image of Sheikh Mohammed shaking hands with Haqqani, the Taliban's interior minister who also heads the Haqqani network, a powerful network within the group blamed for some of the bloodiest attacks. *—AP*

UK GENERAL ELECTIONS

Sir Keir Starmer said it was 'garbage' to claim he would raise taxes by £2,000 as he traded blows with Rishi Sunak in their heated first TV debate PHOTO: AL_JAZEERA

Sunak, Starmer clash in 1st debate

UNITED KINGDOM, 5 JUNE

The leaders of the United Kingdom's two top political parties have faced off in their first live television debate of the election campaign, attacking each other over issues from tax to immigration and the National Health Service (NHS).

Conservative Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer, the leader of the Opposition Labour Party, took the floor on Tuesday night in the northwestern town of Salfv ord with a month to go before the 4 July election.

Sunak, whose party is behind by some 20 percentage points in the opinion polls, took a combative approach, lashing out at Labour over tax, noting that inflation had eased to 2 percent and that he had a plan to boost the sluggish economy.

Starmer pointed to the austerity of the Conservatives' early years in government and the chaos of the more recent past, which saw the removal of then-Prime Minister Boris Johnson amid money and ethics scandals, and the brief but devastating 49-day tenure of Liz Truss, whose tax-cutting plans sent mortgages soaring.

Sunak became party leader and prime minister in October 2022. The Labour leader said the election was a choice between more "chaos and division" with the Conservatives and "turning the page and rebuilding with Labour".

Both men were told repeatedly not to speak over each other and asked to lower their voices as they clashed over issues ranging from immigration and education to health, but neither outlined any new plans. But he seemed to make up some ground with the audience when discussing how he planned to tackle immigration, claiming his controversial plan to send certain asylum seekers to Rwanda was a deterrent. *—Al Jazeera*

Rupee rebounds 14 paise to 83.37 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 5 JUNE

The rupee recovered 14 paise to close at 83.37 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, tracking strong buying in domestic equities and lower crude oil prices in international markets. However, a surging greenback against major crosses overseas and fresh foreign fund outflows restricted gains in the local currency, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.50 and touched the intra-day peak of 83.28 against the domestic unit during the session. It finally settled at 83.37 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a gain of 14 paise from its previous close. Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said the rupee appreciated as domestic markets recovered some losses of the previous day and reports of intervention by the RBI. —*PTI*

Gold slips ₹80; silver plunges ₹1,200

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Gold prices slipped Rs 80 to Rs 72,820 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday in line with weak trends globally, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had closed at Rs 72,900 per 10 grams in the previous session. Silver prices also plunged Rs 1,200 to Rs 91,900 per kg. In the previous session, it had settled at Rs 93,100 per kg. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,332 per ounce, down USD 3 from the previous close. "Gold prices dropped due to a firm US dollar and technical selling pressure, even though there were indications of a weakening US labour market. "This has further strengthened the expectations that the US Federal Reserve will lower interest rates soon," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In addition, silver also dropped to USD 29.75 per ounce. —*PTI*

Maruti Suzuki to build ₹450cr biogas plant

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Maruti Suzuki India on Wednesday said it will invest Rs 450 crore over a span of three years towards commissioning renewable energy projects linked to solar power and biogas. In FY24, the company invested Rs 120.8 crore in the vertical. The company will increase this investment around fourfold to Rs 450 crore spread over three years starting FY25, it said in a statement. "As we ramp up our production capacity from around 2 million to 4 million by 2030-31, we are also accelerating our efforts to increase the share of sustainable and renewable energy sources across our operations," Maruti Suzuki Managing Director & CEO Hisashi Takeuchi said. Just as the company is bringing multiple technologies in products, it would also focus on multiple renewable energy sources to make the operations greener, he added. The company said it has commenced a pilot biogas plant at its Manesar facility in FY25, harnessing the untapped potential of in-house food waste. —*PTI*

Investors richer as markets bounce back

Sensex jumps 2,303.19 pts, Nifty 735.85 points

MUMBAI, 5 JUNE

A day after facing massive erosion from their wealth, equity investors became richer by Rs 13.22 lakh crore on Wednesday with markets making a strong comeback.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 2,303.19 points, or 3.20 per cent, to settle at 74,382.24. During the day, it rallied 2,455.77 points, or 3.40 per cent, to 74,534.82.

The NSE Nifty climbed 735.85 points or 3.36 per cent to 22,620.35. During the day, the benchmark soared 785.9 points or 3.59 per cent to 22,670.40.

In line with optimism returning at the Dalal Street, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies jumped Rs 13,22,847.05 crore to Rs 4,08,06,552.32 crore (USD 4.89 trillion) on Wednesday.

"Indian market exhibited a spirited recovery driven by broad based buying across various sectors, as political stability appears assured. However, attention will remain on the formation of the government and the forthcoming RBI policy meeting," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

All the 30 Sensex companies ended in the green, with IndusInd Bank jumping nearly 8 per cent. Tata Steel, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bajaj Finance, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank, Hindustan Unilever, and JSW Steel also emerged big gainers.

Tata Steel and Mahindra & Mahindra are the gainers PHOTO: PTI

Tuesday's big laggards NTPC, State Bank of India, Larsen & Toubro and Power Grid also ended in the green.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge jumped 4.41 per cent and smallcap index rallied 2.93 per cent.

All the indices ended in the green, with telecommunication soaring 6.01 per cent, services jumping 5.74 per cent, metal (5.36 per cent), auto (4.50 per cent), commodities (4.48 per cent), and consumer discretionary (4.29 per cent).

As many as 2,597 stocks advanced while 1,221 declined and 100 remained unchanged.

"Over the next few days, there could be a lot of action around NDA staking the claim to form the government, and thereafter a lot of noise could be around key portfolio/ministry allocation which will keep the equity markets volatile," Rupen Rajguru, Head Equity Investments and Strategy, Julius Baer India, said. In line with weak trend in equities on Tuesday, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies had eroded Rs 31,07,806.27 crore to Rs 3,94,83,705.27 crore (USD 4.73 trillion). —*PTI*

AMID PRICE PRESSURES & HEATWAVE

India's service sector growth softens to 5-month-low

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

India's service sector growth eased to a five-month low in May amid fierce competition, price pressures and a severe heatwave, even as new orders from international markets expanded at the steepest pace in a decade, according to a monthly survey released on Wednesday.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Services Business Activity Index fell to 60.2 in May from 60.8 a month earlier, its lowest mark since last December.

Survey participants attributed the figures to domestic new orders easing slightly while remaining robust, implying strong demand conditions and successful advertising.

In the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

May data showed that robust increases in new business intakes continued to underpin output growth across India's service economy.

As per the survey, another positive takeaway was a rebound in business confidence to its strongest in eight months.

Growth was reportedly supported by rising sales, productivity gains, and demand strength. The upturn was somewhat hampered by competitive and price pressures.

Growth was reportedly supported by rising sales, productivity gains, and demand strength PHOTO: PIXABAY

Maitreyi Das, Global Economist at HSBC, said: "India's service activity rose at a slightly softer pace in May, with domestic new orders easing slightly, but remaining robust, implying strong demand conditions and successful advertising.

"On the price front, cost pressures ticked up in May led by higher raw material and labour costs. Firms were only able to transfer a part of the price rise to customers."

Like for output, new orders rose at a substantial pace, but were the slowest in the calendar year-to-date, even as fierce competition and extreme heat across the country dampened growth.

One area that improved substantially in May was new export orders, with growth climbing to the fastest seen since the inception of the series in September 2014. Survey participants noted strong growth of demand from Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and the US.

Not only did employment rise markedly, but also to the greatest extent since August 2022, the survey said. —*PTI*

SpiceJet plans to raise $250M in next couple of months

AIR INDIA PLANS TO RETROFIT 100 AIRCRAFTS: CEO

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

SpiceJet Chief Ajay Singh on Wednesday said the airline will be raising around USD 250 million in the next couple of months as the budget carrier works on boosting its operations.

The airline is tackling multiple headwinds, including lessor and debt woes, with Singh saying the carrier has faced "significant black swan events".

"It is difficult to kill SpiceJet....and we are trying to fix the problems," he said and asserted that the airline's balance sheet will be cleaned up over the next two quarters.

Recently, the airline raised USD 150 million and is looking for more funds.

The airline plans to raise USD 250 million in the next couple of months and there is a bright enough future, Singh said at the CAPA India Aviation Summit in the national capital.

Currently, the carrier has wet leased some aircraft as many of its planes are grounded due to various reasons. —*PTI*

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Air India will be retrofitting more than 100 planes, including 40 wide body planes, and has ordered around 25,000 aircraft seats as part of revamping the fleet, its chief Campbell Wilson said on Wednesday.

Emphasising that "plenty of things" are going on as part of the transformation at Air India, Wilson said the focus is on integration, growth, optimisation and customer experience. Air India Express Managing Director Aloke Singh said the airline will focus on the cost side and transformation plans in 2024-25.

As part of Tata Group consolidating its aviation business, AIX Connect, formerly AirAsia India, is getting merged with Air India Express and Vistara with Air India. —*PTI*

MAURITIUS LARGEST CONTRIBUTOR

India's FDI steady at $70.9 billion in FY24

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Maintaining consistency in attracting foreign investment inflows, India has received a total foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow of USD 70.9 billion in the financial year 2023-24. India received the highest FDI of USD 6 billion in October last year followed by USD 5.9 billion in January 2024.

Out of total FDI flows, FDI equity inflow received during FY 2023-24 stood at USD 44.4 billion. The equity inflows for the quarter January 2024 to March 2024 stood at USD 12 billion registering a 33 per cent year-on-year growth.

The FDI inflow in construction (infrastructure activities), construction Development and power sectors more than doubled in 2023-24.

Further, the cumulative amount of FDI inflow into the country stood at USD 990 billion and the cumulative amount of EDI Equity inflow into India stands at USD 678 billion during the period April 2000 to March 2024.

FDI equity inflow received during FY 2023-24 stood at USD 44.4 billion PHOTO: ANI

The largest contributor to the country's FDI inflow was Mauritius with a total of 25 per cent, followed by Singapore which infused 24 per cent of the total FDI inflow in the country. The share of the USA stood at 10 per cent, the Netherlands at 7 per cent and the share of Japan stood at 6 per cent from April 2000 to March 2024.

Singapore continued to be the largest contributor to India's FDI inflow since 2028-19, as per the government data. In 2017-18, India attracted the maximum FDI from Mauritius. —*ANI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

GOVT LOOKING TO DEVELOP MORE AIRSTRIPS

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

The Civil Aviation Ministry is looking at developing more airstrips as well as calibrating regulations for major and small airports to boost air connectivity, a senior official said on Wednesday.

India is one of the fastest growing civil aviation markets in the world, with domestic air traffic on the rise and airlines expanding their fleet as well as operations.

Civil Aviation Secretary Vumlunmang Vualnam said the number of airports in the country has increased to 157 from 74 in the last ten years.

The ministry has reviewed the full list of 453 airstrips in the country and around 157 of them are operational, he said and added that more airstrips would be developed as brownfield projects.

Also, efforts will be made to jointly develop more defence airfields for civil aircraft operations.

Speaking at the CAPA India Aviation Summit 2024 in the national capital, the secretary said the ministry would look at calibrating regulations for major and small airports.

These are steps aimed at further boosting air connectivity, especially to Tier 2 and 3 cities.

IndiGo and Air India have placed huge aircraft orders, including for wide-body planes.

The ministry would ensure a conducive ecosystem for airlines and their expansion. Among others, the ministry is working to ensure that "taxation would not be a bottle neck" for the MRO (Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul) organisations, the

Zomato, Blinkit to protect delivery partners from heat

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

With large swathes of India being under the grip of heatwave and several cities recording temperatures above normal levels, food delivery and e-commerce platforms have come up with a slew of measures to shield their delivery partners from the scorching heat.

Food delivery platform Zomato has established 450 rest points for delivery partners across the country, regardless of their company. The rest points are equipped with comfortable seating, free drinking water, mobile charging points, and clean washroom facilities.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Zomato also urged its users on X to avoid ordering during peak afternoon unless absolutely necessary.

E-commerce platform Flipkart is also taking measures to protect its wishmasters (delivery workforce) from the torrid summer. —*PTI*

IXIGO'S PARENT EYES ₹740 CR VIA IPO

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Le Travenues Technology Ltd, which operates travel booking platform ixigo, is looking to raise up to Rs 740 crore through its initial share-sale opening for public subscription on 10 June.

The issue, with a price band of Rs 88 to Rs 93 per share, will conclude on 12 June and bids for anchor investors will open for a day on 7 June.

The company's IPO is a combination of fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 120 crore and an Offer For Sale (OFS) of 6.66 crore equity shares to the tune of Rs 620 crore, at the upper end of the price band, by existing shareholders. —*PTI*

New govt to build on past success in tech, says IT Secy

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

As the NDA is set to form government for a third term, tech initiatives are expected to maintain pace, with IT Secretary S Krishnan on Wednesday saying that Meity will take up a slew of new initiatives as planned, while building on the legacy of past successes and outcomes.

Krishnan, speaking on the sidelines of a Software Technology Park of India (STPI) event, said the ministry has a "number of initiatives which have been planned and are in the works" and those will be taken up once the new government is in place.

To a question on whether the work on Digital Personal Data Protection rules and shaping Digital India legislation framework will continue at speed, he said, "the legacy in terms of what we have in the organisation in terms of... institutional memory continues." The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology will push ahead with its agenda, he said. —*PTI*

S Krishnan PHOTO: ANI

KEC International gets new orders worth over ₹1K cr

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Infrastructure company KEC International on Wednesday said it has secured new orders worth over Rs 1,000 crore in the domestic market. The orders include residential projects in northern and southern India from renowned real estate developers. It also includes construction of official residences and associated facilities for defence officials, the company said. Its civil business has secured orders worth Rs 1,002 crore, it said. It is a global infrastructure engineering, procurement and construction company. It has a presence in the verticals of power transmission and distribution, railways, solar, oil & gas pipelines.—*PTI*

MODI 3.0?

Moody's expects policy continuity post polls

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance's (NDA) slim majority in Lok Sabha may delay more far-reaching economic and fiscal reforms that could impede progress on fiscal consolidation, Moody's Ratings said today.

NDA securing a majority in the general elections will give a historic third term for Narendra Modi as Prime Minister of India.

"We expect policy continuity, especially with regards to budgetary emphasis on infrastructure spending and boosting domestic manufacturing, to support robust economic growth."

"However, the NDA's relatively slim margin of victory, as well as BJP's loss of its outright majority in parliament, may delay more far-reaching economic and fiscal reforms that could impede progress on fiscal consolidation," Moody's said in a note.

The rating agency said near-term economic momentum masks structural weaknesses that pose risks to long-term potential growth PHOTO: ANI

India's fiscal outcomes will remain weaker than Baa-rated peers, even as the final budget for the fiscal year ending March 2025 (fiscal 2024-25) to be released in the next few weeks provides some indications of India's fiscal policy over the course of the term of the incoming government through 2029, it said. In fiscal 2023-24, India's real GDP accelerated to 8.2 per cent from 7.0 per cent in the previous year, driven by gains in gross fixed capital formation as the government's infrastructure programme gained further traction even as private consumption remained subdued.

The rating agency said near-term economic momentum masks structural weaknesses that pose risks to long-term potential growth. —*PTI*

Lupin arm acquires two brands from Sanofi

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Drug maker Lupin on Wednesday said its European arm has completed the acquisition of two brands from Sanofi.

Lupin Atlantis Holdings SA has completed the acquisition of Aarane in Germany and Nalcrom in Canada and the Netherlands, along with the associated trademark rights, from Sanofi, the Mumbai-based drug maker said in a statement.

The transaction aligns with the company's strategy to grow its global presence in speciality areas, it added.

The acquisition will enhance Lupin's respiratory business in Germany, by aiding in the expansion of the newly established franchise, following the introduction of Luforbec, it said.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

"This acquisition will strengthen our global position in treating patients suffering from diverse respiratory diseases and conditions, and it adds accretive assets in gastro-intestinal care that broaden our portfolio of branded products," Lupin President Corporate Development Fabrice Egros said. —*PTI*

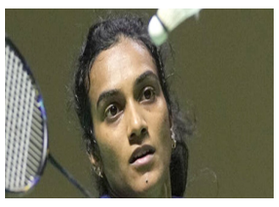


PHOTO: PTI

Sindhu loses in the first round of Indonesia Open

JAKARTA, 5 JUNE

India's ace shuttler P V Sindhu went down to Hsu Wen-chi of Chinese Taipei in the first round of the Indonesia Open on Wednesday, making a stunning early exit from the BWF Super 1000 tournament. A two-time Olympic medallist and a former world champion, Sindhu lost the women's singles contest 15-21, 21-15, 14-21, which was her maiden loss to Wen-chi. The Taiwanese shuttler took an hour and 10 minutes to beat the Commonwealth Games gold medallist. In a women's doubles round of 32 matches, the Indian duo of Rutaparna Panda and Swetaparna Panda lost to Korea's sixth-seeded pair of Kim So Yeong and Kong Hee Yong 12-21 9-21.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

We are learning from mistakes: Navneet

LONDON, 5 JUNE

Six straight losses in the FIH Pro League have completely exposed the Indian women's hockey team's weaknesses and vice-captain Navneet Kaur says the players are looking to learn from these setbacks in the last two outings to finish their campaign on a positive note. India is scheduled to face Germany and Great Britain in their last two games of the FIH Pro League 2023-24 on Saturday and Sunday respectively. "We have faced tough challenges but each match has been a valuable learning experience for us. Despite the setbacks, our team has shown resilience and improvement, especially in our closely contested matches against Belgium and Great Britain."—*PTI*

Sandeep Kaur handed 10-year ban by NADA

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

The Anti-Doping Disciplinary Panel (ADDP) of the NADA has suspended powerlifter Sandeep Kaur for 10 years, one of the longest ban periods handed by the committee, for her second doping offence as well as for using multiple prohibited drugs which constituted aggravating circumstances. The 31-year-old Punjab powerlifter received a year ban for her second doping offence -- the first being in 2019 (tested positive for Stanozolol) —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Afridi looks forward to cricket's Super Bowl on 9 June

NEW YORK, 5 JUNE

Shahid Afridi sees the India-Pakistan contest as an equivalent to the hugely popular 'Super Bowl' in the USA and reckons whichever team handles nerves better will come out on top in the T20 World Cup contest in New York on 9 June. The last time the two teams played at the T20 World Cup, it turned out to be a game for the ages with Virat Kohli pulling off a special win for India. Cricket's biggest game will take place on American shores for the first time and former Pakistan captain Afridi too will be keenly following it from the stands. "For those Americans discovering the tournament, they should know that Pakistan's game against India is like our Super Bowl," Afridi, who is the T20 World Cup ambassador, told ICC.—*PTI*

T20 WORLD CUP

Australia chase history, Pak open campaign against USA

Babar-led side looks like the outright favourite to win the clash

BRIDGETOWN, 5 JUNE

With the World Test Championship mace and the 50-over World Cup trophy already in their bag, Australia will look to hit the ground running in their quest to become the first team to simultaneously hold all three world titles when they take on Oman in their T20 World Cup opener here.

To accomplish the feat, the former champions will rely on their wealth of experience, with several of Australia's greatest modern-era players, preparing for their final farewell in international colours.

The T20 trophy evaded Australia for the longest time but the maiden title in 2021 changed that. However, a year later, they failed to progress from the league stage on home soil.

PHOTO: X / @T20WORLDCUP

However, Australia have no dearth of match-winners in their squad, starting from newly-appointed skipper Mitchell Marsh. The all-rounder will be a key factor batting at No.3. Travis Head has been in red-hot form and was the side's star performer in the WTC final and ODI World Cup final.

Match starts at 6 am IST

Last edition's runners-up Pakistan will take on co-hosts USA in the day's other match. While on paper, the Babar Azam-led side looks like the outright favourite to win the clash, Pakistan's recent form suggests that it might not be a cakewalk. Pakistan lost a T20 International in Ireland and then suffered a 0-2 defeat in England this week, not the ideal result before a global event. Before that, they drew 2-2 at home with a New Zealand side that was missing many of its World Cup squad members.

The run-up to the marquee event has been chaotic, to say the least with a change in captaincy, shuffling of the top order and players coming out of retirement.

Babar was reinstated as skipper after Shaheen Afridi was handed the T20 captaincy for a short time. The pacer was offered vice-captaincy later but he refused to take it.

Babar and Mohammad Rizwan are Pakistan's most consistent T20 performers but their strike rate has been a cause of concern as the duo has struggled to accelerate.

Match Starts 9 pm IST

—*PTI*

Pragg loses to Carlsen; Vaishali beats Muzychuk

STAVANGER, 5 JUNE

Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa went down fighting against top seed Magnus Carlsen of Norway while his elder sister defeated overnight sole leader Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine in the eighth round of the Norway chess tournament here.

With the win, Carlsen stretched his lead to a full point over Hikaru Nakamura of the United States, who lost to Firouzja Alireza of France.

Meanwhile, World champion Ding Liren of China's dismal run continued as he lost to Fabiano Caruana of the United States.

With just two rounds to go in the six-player double round-robin tournament, Carlsen has 14.5 points ahead of Nakamura at 13.5. Praggnanandhaa on 12 is in third spot, a full point clear of Alireza.

R Praggnanandhaa PHOTO: PTI

Caruana is on nine occupying the fifth spot while Liren seemed to have resigned to his fate in this event being distant last on 4.5 points.

In the women's section, world champion Wenjun Ju of China scored over Pia Cramling of Sweden to surge ahead of the field on 14.5 points benefitting from Muzychuk's loss against Vaishali.

The Ukrainian remained in the second spot on 13 points, 1.5 points ahead of Vaishali and Tingjie Lei of China who accounted for Koneru Humpy in the other game of the day.

—*PTI*

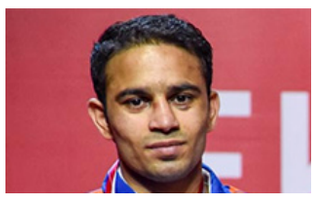
Panghal banked on skills and luck to win in Paris

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Amit Panghal didn't believe in destiny until the setback at the Tokyo Olympics and the subsequent struggles. As he waded through the challenging phase, the boxer realized that he would need a bit of "kismet", besides his incredible skills, to land a medal at the Paris Games."

After the Tokyo Olympics, I have started believing in kismet," Panghal told PTI on Wednesday.He once stood at the pinnacle of his sport with gold medals at the Asian Games and Asian Championships and a historic silver at the World Championships, the only Indian male boxer to achieve the feat.

His stellar run had propelled him to the world's number one spot in his weight class and made him a strong medal prospect.However, his journey took a dramatic turn. Not only did Panghal's Olympic dreams



Amit Panghal PHOTO: ANI

lie shattered following a pre-quarterfinal exit, but he also lost his spot in the national team based on BFI's evaluation system, which was drafted by then High-Performance Director Bernard Dunne.

The repeated snubs severely dented his confidence and made him question his abilities."Jo humare foreign coaches unka muh dekh kar toh nahi lag raha tha mere samay aayega par kismat mei hota hai toh sabko milta hai (Looking at our coaches' faces, I did not feel that my time would come.

—*PTI*

ALCARAZ BEATS TSITSIPAS TO SET S/F SHOWDOWN WITH SINNER

PARIS, 5 JUNE

Third-seeded Carlos Alcaraz sailed into the semifinals of the French Open for the second consecutive year with a 6-3, 7-6(3), 6-4 win over ninth seed and 2021 Roland-Garros finalist Stefanos Tsitsipas on Wednesday.

The 21-year-old Spaniard kept his perfect head-to-head record with Tsitsipas intact with the win, improving to 6-0 all-time against the Greek. Since a five-set thriller between the two at the 2021 US Open, Alcaraz has lost just one set all-time in the match-up.

lcaraz broke serve to start the match and never trailed in the first two sets. He surrendered just four points on his serve in the opener and accumulated a 6-3, 4-1 lead in just about an hour of play.

For a brief moment, Tsitsipas found a spark and leveled the set by winning three straight games. But three errors from Greek and two winners from Alcaraz gave the Spaniard a 5-1 cushion and in just an hour and a half on court the two-time Grand Slam champion pocketed two sets.

Carlos Alcaraz PHOTO: X/@ROLANDGARROS

In the third set, Tsitsipas lost his 30-0 lead in the seventh game due to errors and double faults. Alcaraz almost lost the final game after missing two forehands, but he recovered with three successful returns and a forehand winner, securing his place in the semi-finals against Sinner."I think it was a really good match.

I played great. I think there weren't ups and downs in my game. I controlled very well my emotions, on the court. I was calm in the moments I had to be and I'm really happy with the way that I managed everything, the way that I played and to play a semifinal here again in Roland-Garros.",," said Alcaraz after the match.

Alcaraz set up a tantalizing final-four clash with the world No.1-in-waiting and Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner after a quarter-final win.Alcaraz's head-to-head with his semifinal opponent is tied at 4-4. He won their most recent match, a three-setter on his way to this year's Indian Wells title, but Sinner has won both of their previous Grand Slam meetings at Wimbledon and the US Open, both in 2022, according to ATP.When asked about his semifinal showdown against Sinner, he said "It's a really difficult challenge.

Jasmine Paolini upsets Elena Rybakina to reach semifinal

Italian surprise package Jasmine Paolini staved off a fightback from fourth seed Elena Rybakina to seal a stunning 6-2 4-6 6-4 win on Wednesday and advance to the French Open semifinals for the first time.

The 12th-seeded Paolini set up a last-four showdown with either Belarusian world number two Aryna Sabalenka or Russian 17-year-old Mirra Andreeva, who meet in the quarter-finals later on Court Philippe Chatrier."It's an unbeatable feeling. It was a tough match," said Paolini, who became the fourth Italian woman after Francesca Schiavone, Sara Errani, and Martina Trevisan to make the Roland Garros semifinals in the Open era."I was too emotional in the second set. I said to myself 'It's okay she's a great champion.

It can happen. Just fight and try to hit every ball."Playing in her first Grand Slam quarterfinal, the 28-year-old Paolini got off to a confident start by winning the opening two games and forced her opponent to work hard to hold serve, before breaking again en route to taking the first set.

A sublime backhand winner gave Paolini another break in the third game of the next set but 2022 Wimbledon champion Rybakina responded with one of her own and slowly came to grips with the Italian's power and precision. Russian-born Kazakh Rybakina exchanged breaks with Paolini again but the 24-year-old held firm to level the contest at one set apiece and recovered after surrendering her serve at the start of the decider.Paolini secured a hold to love to make it 4-4, playing at the level she showed early in the match and she took advantage of Rybakina's errors to close out a famous victory to huge cheers inside the main showcourt.

—*AP*

Jasmine Paolini PHOTO: X/@ROLANDGARROS

Bopanna-Ebden duo sails into s/fs of French Open

PARIS, 5 JUNE

The second-seeded Indo-Australian duo of Rohan Bopanna and Matthew Ebden sailed into the semifinals of the French Open with a comfortable victory over Belgium's Sander Gille and Joran Vliegen in the men's doubles quarterfinals here on Wednesday.

The pair won 7-6 (3) 5-7 6-1 at Court Suzanne Lenglen. Bopanna and Ebden took one hour and four minutes to complete their win over the Belgium duo, seeded 10th in the year's second Grand Slam. In an exciting contest, Bopanna and Ebden prevailed to take the first set but the Belgians came back strongly to win the second set.

However, the third set was a cruise for Bopanna and Ebden as they broke early to quickly

Bopanna and Matthew PHOTO: PTI

establish their dominance and never gave their opponents an inch. It hasn't been an easy road to the quarterfinals for the duo of Bopanna and Ebden as they played three-setters in their first and third-round matches too. In the third round of their pre-quarterfinals, Bopanna and Ebden needed a super tiebreak to emerge winners after being pushed to the brink of elimination by the unseeded team of N Sriram Balaji and MA Reyes-Varela Martinez. —*PTI*

INTERNATIONAL RETIREMENT

It's not about me and my last match: Sunil

KOLKATA, 5 JUNE

Indian football team talisman Sunil Chhetri on Wednesday played down the hype around his last international match and sought to bring the focus back to the team's crucial FIFA World Cup Qualifier against Kuwait here.

A win on Thursday will almost guarantee the Indian team a maiden appearance in the third round of the FIFA World Cup, the finals of which are scheduled to be held in the USA, Canada and Mexico in 2026.

Chhetri last month announced that the second leg match against Kuwait would be his last in international football, having enjoyed a glorious career spanning 19 years.

"It's not about me and my last match. I don't want to address it again and again. We want to win this game. This is not going to be easy, but we are ready. We will have tremendous support," Chhetri said on the eve of the second-round match.

India Football Team skipper Sunil Chhetri claims he would passionately follow the team but won't return after IND vs KUW clash PHOTO: PTI

The 39-year-old champion striker, who has already chalked out his immediate plans after walking into international sunset, added, "If we win tomorrow we almost qualify. Five top games home and away, I am going to wear nice suits and watch the match wherever the team travels.

"Every day I talk to the boys, I keep telling them about this dream. The longer camp helps because we come from different mentalities. It gives you much more time to work on details. It's not life-changing, but it causes you to work on details."

Approaching 40, Chhetri was still asked if he plans to reconsider his decision but he responded in the negative.

"No sir, suits are made and I am going to watch the boys play. I have thought about it a lot. I had a great ride all this 19 years. I will go as a fan and support the team wherever the team goes."

—*PTI*

A win against Kuwait will be biggest moment: Igor

A win in Thursday's crucial match against Kuwait will virtually take India to their maiden appearance in the third round of the World Cup qualifiers and head coach Igor Stimac feels that feat can change the future of the country's football.Himself a member of the 1998 World Cup bronze-medal winning Croatian side, Stimac on Wednesday said India joining the Asian elite in the third round from where direct slots for the 2026 World Cup will be decided will the "biggest moment" of his entire career.

Hero's Buhler secures 3rd place finish at Ruta 40

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Sebastian Buhler of Hero MotoSports Team Rally secured an impressive third place finish in the second stage of the Desafio Ruta 40 2024.

His teammates in the Rally GP class, Ross Branch and Ignacio Cornejo crossed the finish line in the fifth and ninth positions respectively.

Buhler clocked 4h 19m 42s, while Branch finished at 4h 21m 35s and Cornejo made it past the line at 4h 29m and 59 seconds.

In the Rally 2 category, Hero's sole representation – Ramiro Barco – finished ninth.

Stage 2 was the longest of the week at a total of 724 km, including 423 km of special in the Argentinian landscape.

Buhler was leading the race until the 232 km mark and later dropped to the second

Sebastian Buhler PHOTO: ANI

position behind the leader until 325 km.

Unfortunately, he lost a bit of time after refueling, but his fantastic performance earned him a spot on the podium.

With this, Buhler also maintained the fourth overall position, just 20 seconds behind the podium. —*PTI*